

**The Relationships between Ultimate Reality, Human
Being and Nature in Korea**

**A Comparison of the Eological Theologies of Chiha Kim
(1941~), Pomnyun (1953~) and Hyunju Lee (1944~)**

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**A thesis presented to the University of Edinburgh
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
January 2005**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and constitutes the results of my research on the subject.

Sukho Kim
January 2005



Abstract

During the Korean War (1950-1953), most of the Korean peninsula was devastated by indiscriminate bombing, and those who survived the war suffered poverty and famine in the 1950s. In the 1960s and 70s, industry and the economy became the top priority in the setting of national policies. As a result, water and air was intolerably polluted by industrial and domestic waste and by the smoke emissions of vehicles and factories, and environmental concern consequently became an urgent priority in the 1980s-90s. Although there were some voices of protest from environmental organizations against this indiscriminate industrialisation, their campaigns could not prevent the onslaught.

The old Korean proverb “body and land are not two but one (身土不二)”, reflects the belief of most Korean people that they cannot live apart from the land of Korea. The contemporary ecological crisis reminds us of a serious question: Can people and nature continue to co-exist in the future? The environmental movement, apart from aiming at protecting the natural world from human beings’ exploitation, should seriously find a way to change a world view or one’s sense of values which continuously influence people’s lifestyle. ‘Ecological worldview’ in this thesis denotes a religious or philosophical reflection on the way that humanity and all other organisms can co-exist, critically reviewing the failings of the existing world views, which led to the present ecological crisis, and suggesting a relationship model between humanity and other organisms.

Shamanism, Taoism, Confucianism, Donghak, Christianity, etc were introduced, accumulated, and shaped the Korean mentality during the course of history and contributed to a unique Korean culture in which various religions co-exist. Presently, Buddhism and Christianity are statistically the major religions of Korea. Shamanism, Taoism, Confucianism, etc have widely influenced the customs of Korean society. In this understanding of the multi-religious context, this thesis examines Korean ecological theology through three thinkers who have their backgrounds in Donghak, Buddhism and Christianity, respectively. Chiha Kim, a poet, writer, and civil activist, Pomnyun, a Buddhist monk and campaigner for South and North Korea unification, and Hyunju Lee, a Methodist minister and writer of children’s stories, are all well-known representatives of ecological theology at present.

They all argue that understanding the relationship between ultimate reality, humanity, and the natural world can overcome ecological crisis, although they are not satisfied

with this artificial classification of ultimate reality, humanity, and nature. The basis for the relationship has been described according to their religious backgrounds as 'life', 'dependent origination', and 'incarnation', but they commonly describe it in terms of 'indivisibility', 'interconnectedness', or 'oneness'. 'Life' is described as 'an endless dynamic generation' within all existences (Chiha Kim). 'Dependent origination' is the principle that states that all realities have been endlessly interconnected (Pomnyun). Hyunju Lee argues that all existences are an expression of divine incarnation, and all beings having spirituality cannot exist independent from each other but are one.

Korean ecological theology in the multi-religious context point to '*Cheon-ji-in Habi*l Sasang (天地人合一 思想, the Idea of the Unity of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity)'. That is, although all realities have their own independent natures and unique forms, they all have 'a triune nature' as their fundamental common nature which can be understood through the concepts of 'holistic dynamism', 'organic interconnectedness', and 'spirituality or sociality'. In this understanding, Korean ecological theology rejects any centrism, which may lead to hierarchy because ultimate reality, humanity, and the natural world exist in 'one inseparable community'.

Acknowledgements

Without the significant guidance and support of many generous people from the beginning of my itinerary of doing research up to the present, this thesis would not have been born. I give my sincere appreciation to them.

I thank first my parents, Yuju Kim (김유주) and Ransim Wee (위란심), who tirelessly prayed and supported me. They prayed for me every day early in the morning, and supported me with ceaseless love. Without them I could not have overcome many crucial moments in my life and studies; they have always been my great strength.

I am indebted in countless ways to my supervisor, Dr. Michael S. Northcott. He not only continuously provided me with wisdom and encouragement through his academic guidance, but also cared for me and my family. It would have been difficult for me to finish this thesis without his continuous academic advice, and his friendly concern was always encouragement for me and my family as we lived away from home. His endurance and scholarly enthusiasm became an excellent model of what I should aim to accomplish in the future.

I wish to express my special gratitude to all ‘natural’ friends who live in the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. Trees, flowers, birds, squirrels, etc. comforted and inspired me whenever I visited to relieve my stress. Most ideas of this thesis were designed during walks with these natural friends. I will not forget their silent support.

Finally, I give all my heart to my dear wife, Youngran Kang (강영란), and my lovely three children, Joohee Kim (김주희), Hayoung Kim (김하영), and Jooyoung Kim (김주영). Without them I could not have arrived here. My wife as my closest friend always listened whenever I struggled with this thesis, and helped me to keep up with my research. I confess that this thesis has been produced upon her continuous support and sacrifice. My children’s lovely smiles made me happy all the time, and provided strength for doing my research.

I believe and accept that all of them are my gift and blessing from God.

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Prolegomena

1. Introduction

The Korean peninsula is located between China and Japan and is about 220 thousand square meters, similar in size to the United Kingdom. It significantly changed as a result of the Korean War (1950-53) and industrialisation. More than 2 million people were killed, and the whole country was left devastated by indiscriminate bombing. After the Korean War, most hills and mountains were plundered by people looking for food and shelter. Many plants were cut and trees felled because of the poverty and famine of the 1950s. When the military government came into power in 1961, they introduced a powerful economic policy 'the first five-year plan for economic development' to eliminate poverty. Since 1962, Korea has rapidly industrialised and by the 1970s a remarkable development was achieved, which is referred to as 'the miracle of the Han river' by foreign countries. Korea had become one of the 4 little tigers of Asia together with Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. However, economic growth was accompanied by rapid urbanisation, the development of industrial complexes, and the construction of heavy chemical industry, motorways, dams, power plants and harbours, which inevitably caused nationwide destruction of land and mountains, polluting water and air. The economic development provided material richness and convenience on the one hand, but on the other it also resulted in an ecological crisis.

The environmental movement began in 1982 when 'the Research Institute of the Pollution Problem of Korea', the first public environmental organisation, was established to preserve nature. The movement became nationwide when the 'the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement' was established in 1993. Although ecological policy took an important step in preserving nature and other ecological issues, it did not attempt to lead a change of people's modern lifestyle and cosmology, which has been addicted to material richness and convenience. Despite the view according to which advanced science and technology could deal with the crisis without having to change

the pattern of production and consumption in the modern industrial society,¹ I believe that the ecological movement has to engage with the lifestyle created by mass production and consumption because the crisis was caused by the advancement of science and technology. In this recognition, this research was motivated by, and focused on ‘ecological theology’, which might lead the ecological movement.

Although there are various arguments and classifications of ecological theology, they can be classified broadly along two different arguments. The first viewpoint of ecological theology criticises the tendencies of pantheism or panentheism, and the second one is critical to anthropocentric perceptions such as stewardship, preservation of creation, sustainable development, etc. The first argument mainly criticises the uncertainty of ethical responsibility by ambiguously distinguishing between the divine nature and the worldly nature in accordance with monistic or holistic cosmology.² They insist that it does not provide a concrete and ethical practicality and responsibility in its homogeneous perspective, though it can help us to understand the close relationship of ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature. The second argument, which is the opposite of the first one, mainly criticises anthropocentric tendencies over the ecocentric perspective.³ They are sceptical about the effectiveness of human efforts which was a main cause of the crisis in the past, and say that these approaches were reflections of another perspective of human dominant thought. They point out that it does not lead to fundamental change in the anthropocentric civilisation which is one of the main enemies of ecological crisis. They insist on a radical shift of cosmology from humanocentric view to ecocentric view. Because both arguments have their own weak and strong points, they cannot one-sidedly overrule the opposite argument. This research is not to judge these two arguments through any ethical or philosophical analysis, rather to find a suitable ecological theology applicable to the Korean context.

¹ Hoki Kim, “Hwangyeongsasang kwa Hwangyeongundong ui Heureum mit Jaengjeom (환경사상과 환경운동의 흐름 및 쟁점, The Trend and the Argument of Environmental Thought and Movement)”, *Changjak kwa Bipyong* (창작과 비평, Creativity and Criticism), Winter, 1995.

² They are mainly Christian theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Colin E. Gunton, Michael S. Northcott, James Nash, etc.

³ They are mainly deep ecologists Arne Naess, Aldo Leopold, Baird Callicott, etc.

The causes of ecological crisis have been analysed according to the local situations, because environmental destruction derives from various local, cultural, socio-political, or religious reasons. Korea has its own understanding of nature. Therefore, ecological theology in Korea must be considered in the Korean context.

In brief, the purpose of this research is to find a way of ecological theology which might change people's lifestyle and lead the ecological movement in the long term, in Korea. The intention of this thesis is not an attempt to reveal superiority through illustrating religious and cultural values of Korean traditions, or to criticise the Western ecological theology. Rather its ultimate object is to understand and reveal the original nature of Korean ecological theology as an essential foundation of ecological ethics in the context of Korea through the comparative reading of ecological theologies from Christian, Buddhist and Donghak traditions. It is, I think, my actual duty as a Korean Christian who lives in this situation and is interested in ecological theology, and I wish that it could be at least a small contribution to overcoming the ecological crisis which is related to religion, culture, ecology and the daily life of people.

In addition, as I am a Christian theologian, the aim of this research is not to attempt to create an inter-religious ecological theology, but is rather an exercise in Christian comparative theology that seeks to elaborate a Christian theology that builds on the concept of 'harmonisation' with other religious traditions in Korea. Each religion has its own doctrine and religious forms which cannot be mixed with an integrated form though there are some ideas and practices which they do have in common. Each religion in Korea has maintained its identity and vitality in the religiously plural context.⁴ Nevertheless, they have harmoniously co-existed throughout the long Korean history. In this multi-religious context, three Korean ecological theologies will be examined, with the intention of seeking common ground which can be shared within Korea and beyond.

⁴ It will be explained in chapter one.

2. Ecological Theology

The prefix ‘eco’ comes from the Greek ‘oikos’ meaning house not just in the sense of a physical edifice but of a household. Thus ‘ecology’ means knowledge of our total environment including all of the internal connections and the inter-play of elements, also our own involvement in these processes. This is the beginning of the recognition that we live in a complex and sometimes delicate system which we should not manipulate thoughtlessly. Ecological theology goes a step further, or deeper, and suggests, besides a rational and scientific understanding of our ‘household’, a philosophical or religious understanding of the whole universe. Ecological theology does not try to be merely one more area of specialized knowledge which happens to be about our environment, or which somehow aims to study Earth. It looks for a deeper wisdom corresponding to an attitude of reverence of all physical creation. Therefore, ‘ecological theology’ in this thesis means a religious or philosophical reflection on a way that humanity and all other forms of existence can co-exist. That is, ecological theology is a religio-philosophical consideration to critically review the failings of the existing worldview, which led to the present ecological crisis, and to reveal the right relationship between humanity and other existences.

In relation to ecological theology, although the terms, ‘environmental’, ‘ecological’, and ‘life’, have been used widely, each term has its own background. The term ‘environmental’ was mainly used in the aspects of preventing pollution and preserving nature implicitly emphasising human management and effort in line with the anthropocentric viewpoint. The term ‘ecological’ indicates human and non-human worlds simultaneously as one household as an alternative to anthropocentric cosmology. The usage of the term ‘life’ implies matters of poverty, violence, and war, which are still seriously threatening human life, concerning ecological crisis.⁵ This thesis will mainly

⁵ See Younghun Jo, *Dongseoyang ui Jayeonkwan kwa Kidokgyo Hwankyeongyunli* (동서양의 자연관과 기독교 환경윤리, the Concept of Nature in the East and the West and Christian Environmental Ethics),

use the term ‘ecological’ which is the most neutral of the three terms.

Ecological theologies differ, because they are based on local characteristics such as religions, philosophy, culture, etc. In this respect, Korean ecological theology must reflect Korean mentality which has been formed in the context of Korea. It can be said that the Korean mental world and culture has been mainly influenced and formed by Shamanism, Taoism, Confucianism, Donghak and Christianity during the 5000 years of history of Korea. Therefore, this thesis will deal with these religions in relation to ecological theology, particularly through the understanding of the contemporary ecological thinkers, Chiha Kim (김지하), Pomnyun (법륜) and Hyunju Lee (이현주). These three thinkers, who are closely related to the present ecological theology, have their own religious backgrounds such as Donghak, Buddhism, and Christianity. This thesis will examine the Korean contemporary ecological theology through the contribution of these three thinkers, especially in relation to their understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature.

The understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature plays a significant role in ecological philosophy, because an anthropo-, theo-, or ecocentric approach would be decided according to which element is emphasised. The aim of this thesis is to draw characteristics of Korean ecological theology and to investigate its value for ecological movement of Korea.

3. Chiha Kim, Pomnyun, and Hyunju Lee as the Subjects of This Study

Religions in Korea include Shamanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, etc., but Buddhism and Christianity are the main religions at present (Buddhists 23 %,

(Seoul: Daehan Kidokkyo Seohwoi, 2002), 47-61; Samyeol Lee, ed., *Saengmyeong ui Sinhak kwa Yunli* (생명의 신학과 윤리, Theology of Life and Ethics), (Seoul: Yeolinmunhwa, 1997), 19-22.

Christians 26 %).⁶ Therefore, the Buddhist monk, Pomnyun and the Methodist minister, Hyunju Lee, were selected as representatives of the main religions in Korea. I believe that they are some of the most active ecological thinkers. Chiha Kim was chosen because he is one of few people who is the most influential and widely known in relation to ecological theology. His religious background is in Donghak which is one of Korea's national religions. These thinkers are well known in the ecological movement in Korea, and they are energetically working on ecological issues at the moment.

The history of the ecological movement encompasses around 30 years. In this short period, there have not been many ecological thinkers who influenced ecological movement directly or indirectly. The three thinkers do not call themselves ecological thinkers. Nevertheless, I selected them because they have produced many writings, which provide an insight into the ecological movement from different religious aspects. They have also participated actively in the ecological movement. I do not think that these three thinkers can cover all Korean ecological theologies, but it is believed that these three thinkers' ideas on ecology at least reveal typical styles of Korean ecological thinking. Moreover, they are very influential at present. Therefore, the examination of the three thinkers' theories would provide an answer to how Korean ecological theology has been shaped recently. Detailed articles about the three thinkers will be presented in the main chapters of the thesis.

With the exception of Chiha Kim, Pomnyun and Hyunju Lee have not yet been examined academically, though they have produced various writings. The reason for this is probably that they are still alive and have religious status. Therefore, there are only few secondary sources which analyse their thought. Chiha Kim, who is well known for his resistance poetry, has been studied slightly more in literary circles with special regards to his 'life thought'. However, the aim of most existing secondary sources is to continue and expand their thoughts, as opposed to offering critical examination.

⁶ See the information of Korean National Statistical Office in 2003; the website http://kosis.nso.go.kr/cgi-bin/sws_999.cgi?ID=DT_11N9506&IDTYPE=3&A_LANG=1&FPUB=3&SELITEM=, dated December 10, 2004.

Moreover, none of the existing studies have attempted to elucidate the characteristics of their thoughts as ecological theology. In this sense, this research may have its value in itself, but it must be based on primary sources.

4. Research Hypotheses

The aim of this research is to address the characteristics of Korean ecological theology through examining the works of the three thinkers. To this end, several key research questions arise that will be pursued in this thesis:

- * What are the factors that motivated the three thinkers to develop ecological theology?
- * What religious or philosophical backgrounds are their ecological theologies based on?
- * How do they understand the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature?
- * What characteristics does this relationship have according to the three thinkers?
- * What are the commonalities and differences in their ecological theologies?
- * Based upon this analysis, what are the characteristics of Korean ecological theology?
- * Do the characteristics have a common ground or a direction the ecological movement can move toward? If so, what is it?

In seeking to answer these research questions, the following hypotheses will be examined in the three main parts into which the thesis is divided. It will be argued that:

- * Korean ecological theology is authentically local as it is determined by the Korean multi-religious context by virtue of its being rooted in, and expressed through people's personal religious lives and reflections.

- * Korean ecological theology its own unique characteristics in the multi-religious context regarding the understanding of the inseparable relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature.
- * Korean ecological theology may provide an insight or a direction to the ecological movement through common elements.

5. Methods and Organisation of the Research

These research questions and hypotheses form the structure of this thesis. It has three parts: 1. Religious and ecological context of Korea, 2. Exposition of Korean ecological theology through the three thinkers' understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature, 3. The characteristics of this relationship revealed through the assessment of the three thinkers' ideas. In Part Two, the the three scholars' ecological theology will be examined as follows: 1. introduction, 2. their life, 3. their basic concepts and religious themes in relation to their ecological theology, 4. their understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature, 5. their ecological characteristics, 6. conclusion. In Part Three, the characteristics of the three thinkers' ecological theology regarding their concept of ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature will be briefly examined, and the common elements will be drawn out as shared characteristics of Korean ecological theology. Finally, a conceptual diagram portraying the common direction of Korean ecological theology will be presented.

This study primarily employs religious and philosophical analysis which is related to cosmology, aiming at systematising and evaluating the three thinkers' ecological ideas, respecting the fact that their writings are non-systematic and rely on religious, philosophical, or literary metaphors in accordance with their religious ideas and experiences. Although it is obvious that such writings provide fertile resources for ecological theology, it is no doubt that their writing itself also involves various religious or philosophical implications which can be adopted into many subjects. Therefore, in

order to articulate their ideas on ecology, their writing has been illuminated and examined from the perspective of 'the understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature'. The main body of this thesis will focus on the exposition of the three thinkers' ecological theology: Chapter 2: Chiha Kim's, Chapter 3: Pomnyun's, Chapter 4: Hyunju Lee's.

Although the three scholars did not intend to systematically articulate the concepts of ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature in their writing, this paper will examine the account of the concepts in order to understand their commonalities and the differences of their ecological theology. Moreover, because their individual understanding of the relationship is deeply related to their own religious experiences and themes, it is inevitable to consider various religious themes in terms of ecological relevance. In order to understand the multi-religious context, it is also necessary to survey various religions throughout the history of Korea. Although the study of comparative religion is not the main purpose of this thesis, various religious themes will be examined and explained in light of the ecological perspective. The first parts of Chapter 2, 3, and 4 will examine the three thinkers' religious experiences and basic themes.

Historical methodology will be used in Chapter 1, which offers an analysis of the historical development of religions in Korea. A large body of historical writing about Korean religions already exists. The specific focus of Chapter 1, however, is upon the religious pluralism of Korea, which is inevitably embodied in Korean culture and mentality and defines the background of the three thinkers. Historical methodology in turn will enable a clearer assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the three thinkers' ideological bases which became the backgrounds of their ecological theologies.

Finally, in Chapter 5 comparative methodology will be employed to attempt to assess the three thinkers' ecological ideas. The aim here will be to identify the characteristics of Korean ecological theology. Without bias, different religious ideas and approaches

will be compared: the concepts of ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature, and the common elements will be labelled as the characteristics of Korean ecological theology. Chapter 6 will summarise the characteristics of Korean ecological theology as a common and overall idea (or concept).

6. Sources

All three thinkers have presented their ideas through books, articles, interviews, lectures, etc. Fortunately, they published many books, and this research will consider these books as the main references and other primary sources will be dealt with as supplementary sources according to the intention and purpose of this thesis. As I have already mentioned before, secondary sources are hard to come by as the three thinkers are still alive and producing writings. The three thinkers' books are as follows:

A. Chiha Kim's Books as Primary Sources

Chiha Kim's books are divided into two categories: poetry or prose, which reveals his literal expression against social injustice, and religious-philosophical writings on his fascinating 'life thought'. These books are:

* *Bap* (밥, Rice), Seoul: Sol, 1995.

* *Byeongdeun Pada Byeongdeun Jigu* (병든 바다 병든 지구, Sick Ocean and Sick Earth), Seoul: Pumwusa, 1994.

* *Donghak Iyagi* (동학 이야기, The Story of Donghak), Seoul: Sol, 1994.

* *Hingeuneul ui Gil 1* (흰그늘의 길 1, The Way of the White Shadow 1), Seoul: Hakgoje, 2003.

* *Hingeuneul ui Gil 2* (흰그늘의 길 2, The Way of the White Shadow 2), Seoul: Hakgoje, 2003.

* *Hingeuneul ui Gil 3* (흰그늘의 길 3, The Way of the White Shadow 3), Seoul: Hakgoje, 2003.

* *Hwangto* (황토, Yellow Mud), Seoul: Sol, 1970.

* *Igeot kwa Jeogeot* (이것과 저것, This and That), Seoul: Dongkwang Publisher,

1991.

* *Kim Chiha ui Hwadu* (김지하의 화두, A Topic of Chiha Kim), Seoul: Hwanam, 2003.

* *Kim Chiha Jeonjib 1* (김지하 전집 1, Chiha Kim's Complete Works 1), Seoul: Silcheon Munhwasa, 2002.

* *Kim Chiha Jeonjib 2* (김지하 전집 2, Chiha Kim's Complete Works 2), Seoul: Silcheon Munhwasa, 2002.

* *Kim Chiha Jeonjib 3* (김지하 전집 3, Chiha kim's Complete Works 3), Seoul: Silcheon Munhwasa, 2002.

* *Minjog ui Nore Minjung ui Nore* (민족의 노래 민중의 노래, The Song of a Nation and the Song of Minjung), Seoul: Dongkwang Publisher, 1984.

* *Mungchimyeon Jugko Heuteojimyeon Sanda* (뭉치면 죽고 흩어지면 산다, If Gather and Die, or Scatter and Live), Seoul: Dongkwang Publisher, 1991.

* *Namjjok Ttang Baetnore* (남쪽땅 뱃노래, Southern Land, Song of the Boat, Seoul: Durae, 1985.

* *Nim* (님, Sir/Madam), Seoul: Sol, 1995.

* *Ojeok* (오적, Five Enemies), Seoul: Sol, 1970.

* *Sasangkihang I* (사상기행 I, An Account of the Travels of Thought I), Seoul: Silcheon Munhagsa, 1999.

* *Sasangkihang II* (사상기행 II, An Account of the Travels of Thought II), Seoul: Silcheon Munhagsa, 1999.

* *Saengmyeong* (생명, Life), Seoul: Sol, 1992.

* *Saengmyeonghak 1* (생명학 1, Lifelogy 1), Seoul: Hwanam, 2003.

* *Saengmyeonghak 2* (생명학 2, Lifelogy 2), Seoul: Hwanam, 2003.

* *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (생명과 자치, Life and Autonomy), Seoul: Sol, 1996.

* *Saengmyeong: Challanhan Chongche* (생명: 이 찬란한 총체, Life: It is a Brilliant Totality), Seoul: Dongkwang Publisher, 1991.

* *Salim* (살림, Living Work), Seoul: Dongkwang Publisher, 1987.

* *Set kwa Dul Gurigo Hondon* (셋과 둘 그리고 혼돈, Three, Two, and Chaos), Seoul: Solkwahak, 2000.

* *Taneun Mogmareum eseo Saengmyeong ui Badaro* (타는 목마름에서 생명의바

다로, From Thirsting to the Ocean of Life), Seoul: Dongkwang Publisher, 1991.

* *Teum* (틈, A Gap), Seoul: Sol, 1995.

* *Yetgaya eseo Ttiuneun Gyeoul Pyeonji* (옛가야에서 띄우는 겨울 편지, Winter Letter from Old Gaya). Seoul: Dure, 2000.

* *Yulnyeoran mueotinga?* (올려란 무엇인가? What is Youlneyeo?), Seoul: Hanmunwha, 1999.

B. Pomyun's Books as Primary Sources

Pomnyun mainly produced writings to popularise Buddhism putting contemporary issues such as the ecological crisis and the reunification of South and North Korea, etc in Buddhist perspective. He also published books in which he reinterpreted basic Buddhist texts for young people and lay people. These books are as follows:

* “Bulkyosasang esoei Saengmyeongmunjae wa Segyekwan (불교사상에서의 생명문제와 세계관, The Matter of Life and Cosmology in Buddhist Thought)”, *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunjae*, (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Thought and Environmental Problem), Seoul: Mosaek, 1996.

* *Banyasimkyeong Iyagi* (반야심경이야기, The Story of the Heart Sūtra), Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 1996.

* *Beonnoi Soguiro Sesang Soguiro* (번뇌속으로 세상속으로, In Anxiety and In the World), Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1997.

* *Bulkyo ui Geunbon Kyori* (불교의 근본교리, The Fundamental Doctrine of Buddhism), Seoul: Jeongto, 2001.

* *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (불교와 환경, Buddhism and Environment). Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1998.

* *Bulkyo wa Whankyeongyunli* (불교와 환경윤리, Buddhism and Environmental Ethics), Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1998.

* *Geumgangkyeong Liyagi I* (금강경 이야기 상, The Story of the Diamond Sūtra I), Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 1996.

* *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunjae*, (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Thought and Environmental Problem), Seoul: Mosaek, 1996.

* *Geumgangkyeong Liyagi II* (금강경 이야기 하, The Story of the Diamond Sūtra II), Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 1997.

- * *Ilkwa Suhaeng, Geu Areumdaun Johwa* (일과 수행, 그 아름다운 조화, Work and Cultivation, the Beautiful Harmony), Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 2002.
- * *Ingan Buddha Geu Widaehan Sarm kwa Sasang* (인간 본다 그 위대한 삶과 사상, Human Buddha: The Great Life and Thought), Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1990.
- * *Jeolmeun Buljadeuleul wihan Suhaenglon* (젊은 불자들을 위한 수행론, The Principle of Practice for Young Buddhists), Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1990.
- * *Kwanmuryang Sukyeong Iyaki* (관무량수경 이야기, The Story of the Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Buddha Amitāyus), Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 2002.
- * *Maumui Pyeonghwa Jabiui Sahwoihwa* (마음의 평화 자비의 사회화, Peace of Mind and the Socialisation of Mercy), Seoul: Jeongto, 2002.
- * *Miraemunmyeong ul Ikeulgogal Saeroun Ingansang* (미래문명을 이끌고 갈 새로운 인간상, New Human Vision to Lead the Culture of the Future), Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1998.
- * “Saerowun Munmyeong Saerowun Ingan (새로운 문명 새로운 인간, New Culture New Humanity)”, in *Globalisation and Spirituality*, the report of Religious Department by Civilians Forum in ASEM(The Asia-Europe Meeting), 2000.
- * *Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (실천적 불교사상, Practical Buddhist Thought), Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1994.
- * *Tongilro Ganeun Gil* (통일로 가는길, The Way Toward Union), Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1999.
- * *Umul uil TTeonan Gaeguri* (우물올 떠난 개구리, A Frog Leaving a Well), Seoul: Jeong To, 1990.

C. Hyunju Lee's Books as Primary Sources

Hyuju Lee has produced various books in genres of poetry, animation, essay, autography, etc. Moreover, he published books, which reinterpreted religious texts of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Through these books, he often reveals the similarities of various religious themes in different religions. His theological writings consist of the assembly of various articles by meditations or lectures. That is, his theological ideas are hidden in his writings, and not addressed in a systematic book. His books are as follows:

- * *Amuil Anhago Jalsanda* (아무일 안하고 잘산다, To Live Well Without Doing

Anything), Seoul: Nokdu, 1993.

* *Bhagavadgita Haeseol* (바가바드기타 해설 Bhagavadgita Trans.), Seoul: Dangdae, 2001.

* *Doksuri Nalgae Haneunim* (독수리 날개 하느님, The Wing of the Eagle God), Seoul: Saenghwal Seongseosa, 1998.

* *Dolabomyeon Baljagugmada Uenchongieotne*, (돌아보면 발자국마다 은총이 었네, Whenever I Look Back, There Was Grace on All My Steps), Seoul: Saenghwal Seongseo, 1995.

* *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sinui Jageun Piri* (그래서 행복한 신의 작은 피리, As Happy As a Small Flute of God), Seoul: Saenghwoal Seongseo, 1999.

* *Gil eseo Jueun Saengkagdeul* (길에서 주운 생각들, Thoughts That Were Picked up on the Way), Seoul: Ullim, 2000.

* *Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (한송이 이름없는 들꽃으로, As an Anonymous Wild Flower), Seoul: Jongro Seojeok, 1984.

* *Jangja Sanchak* (장자산책, A Walk with Chuang-tzu), Seoul: Dasan Guelbang, 1996.

* *Jayeon kwa Ingan ui Areumdaun Mannam* (자연과 인간의 아름다운 만남, Beautiful Meeting between Human Being and Nature), Seoul: Hangukgyohwui Hwangyeong Yeonguso, 2002.

* *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 1* (젊은 세대를 위한 신학강의1, Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 1), Seoul: Dasan Geulbang, 1994.

* *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (젊은 세대를 위한 신학강의2, Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), Seoul: Dasan Geulbang, 1992.

* *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 3* (젊은 세대를 위한 신학강의3, Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation), (Seoul: Dasan Geulbang, 1994.

* *Lee Amugae Moksai Keumgangkyeong Ikgi* (이아무개 목사의 금강경 읽기, Reading of the Diamond Sutra By a Pastor Lee), Seoul: Homi, 2001.

* *Lee Amugae ui Mauemgongbu* (이 아무개의 마음 공부, Mind Discipline of Lee), Seoul: Durae, 2003.

* *Marco Muksang* (마르코 묵상, Meditation on Mark's Gospel), Seoul: Baoro Ttal, 1999.

* *Mul kwa Namun Iyagi* (물과 나눈 이야기, The Story in which I Communicated

with Things), Seoul: Yire, 2001.

* *Nauí Eomeoni Nauí Gyowhoiyeo* (나의 어머니 나의 교회여, My Mother My Church), Seoul: Jongro Seojeok, 1984.

* *Neohiga Nareul Algaedoerira* (너희가 나를 알게 되리라, You Will Know Me), Seoul: Baoro Ttal, 1997.

* *Romaseo Ikgi* (로마서 읽기, Reading of Romans), Seoul: Homi, 2002.

* *Rugabogeum Muksang* (루가복음 묵상, Meditation on Luke's Gospel), Seoul: Baoro Ttal, 1999.

* *Yeshu wa Mannan Saramdeul* (예수와 만난 사람들, People Who Met Jesus), Seoul: Saenghwal Seongseosa, 1986.

* *Yohanbokeum Muksang* (요한복음 묵상, Meditation on John's Gospel), Seoul: Daehankidogkyoseohwoe, 1998.

**PART ONE: RELIGION AND THE ECOLOGICAL
MOVEMENT IN KOREA**

CHAPTER ONE: MULTI RELIGIOUS TRADITION OF KOREA AND ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT

1. Introduction

This thesis is structured in three parts consisting of seven chapters. The first part will examine the religious and ecological context of Korea in two chapters, and aims to gain a preliminary knowledge of Korean ecological theology before we move onto the second part which is the main body. The second part of this thesis has three chapters according to the sequence of the three thinkers: Chiha Kim, Pomnyun, Hyunju Lee. Their ecological theology will be analysed in relation to their understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature. In the last part, the three thinkers' ecological theology will be assessed by comparison in chapter six and the final chapter will try to summarise their unique characteristics in order to move one step forward in building Korean ecological theology.

This chapter aims to analyse the Korean religious context as the background of Korean ecological theology. The religious traditions of Korea as the primary spiritual and intellectual contexts have shaped contemporary Korean ecological theology. This chapter will, therefore, briefly introduce each of the main religious traditions which substantially influenced Korean mentality and intellect throughout the history of Korea, and look at the environmental elements which recently provided intellectual stimulation to scholars and religious thinkers. This examination is significant in order to recognize the religious and intellectual contexts of the three thinkers, Chiha Kim, Pomnyun, and Hyunju Lee, and will help to understand the contemporary Korean ecological theology. Each thinker's ecological theology follows a specific religious tradition: Chiha Kim - Donghak, Pomnyun - Buddhism, and Hyunju Lee - Christianity. Each religious tradition is deeply related to one another on the accumulated religious soil of Korea, according to the flow of history. Therefore, my aim in this chapter is to investigate the religious traditions as the indispensable framework for a full-scale examination of the three

thinker's ecological theologies, and to show the relationship between religious traditions and ecological theology.

The development of religious traditions in Korea has been a complicated process. Religious pluralism in Korea is not simply a matter of different religions existing alongside one another. While each of them has their own place in Korean history, the new coming religion has developed on the foundations of the others in what can be imagined as a layered structure. W. C. Smith in his book 'The Meaning and End of Religion' says that an individual religion consists of layers of traditions and beliefs as an organic accumulation of a community's developing religious life.⁷ At the same time, religion exists as a living phenomenon in people's lives.⁸ The religious traditions of Korea are no exception. Most families in Korea share different religions even among their family members. A father may follow Confucianism, the mother may be a Buddhist, and sons and daughters may be Christians. Different religions can co-exist in one family without resulting in any confrontation, because of the presence of mutual respect and recognition among the members of a family.

In this chapter, I will examine multi-religious traditions following a chronological sequence. Throughout its 5000 year long history, Korea has been influenced by various religious traditions such as Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, Donghak, Christianity, etc. Each religion has accumulated essential elements of the local culture including other religious influences that have played a part in the course of Korean history. Therefore, in order to analyse the Korean religious traditions, one should focus on the layered and accumulative structure of Korean religions as well as on the characteristics of each religion. Ecological elements will also briefly be examined because it will help to understand a Korean mentality in relation to the environment, even though the particular religions did not overtly raise environmental issues in their era. Finally, this chapter will demonstrate that religious pluralism is an inescapable

⁷ W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 154-69.

⁸ Ibid., 156.

reality for all Koreans, and the various religious experiences are not distinct or separate phenomena but traditions that inter-penetrate each other in the accumulated structure of Korean religious pluralism.

2. Multi-Religious Tradition of Korea

In order to examine the structure of Korean religious traditions, it is necessary to reflect on Korean history. In general, Korean history can be divided into several periods: the era of primitive and tribal societies (ca. 2333 B.C. - A.D. 7); the Three Kingdoms (*Samguk*) and Unified *Silla* (A.D. 57 – 935); *Koryeo* (A.D. 918 – 1392); *Choseon* (1392 – 1910); Japanese colonial occupation (1910 – 1945); and the division of Korea into the South and the North (1945 – present). Each period had its distinctive religion: during the time of primitive and tribal societies Shamanism prevailed, during the Unified *Silla* and *Koryeo* the religion was Buddhism, during *Choseon* Confucianism, and since the end of *Choseon* until now Christianity. Each religion was built on top of the previous religions, and the religious structure of Korea was layered over many centuries by incorporating various religions as times changed.

As Korean religious traditions accumulated in religious pluralism in accordance with history, each religion remained alive, without any one religion dominating the others in the long term. It is a very visible phenomenon within the pattern of Korean history, even during periods when one religion was given preference by the ruling dynasty. Each religion that came newly established its presence through compromise and reconciliation with the existing religions. The social influences of each religion continued to shape Korean society into modern times. As a result, Korean culture comprises an intricate inter-weaving of the religious traditions that have formed its history. Although they kept their own identities, they have constantly changed with time by this organic relationship.

In the religious structure of Korean traditions, the bottom of the layer comprises Shamanism; upon this is laid Buddhism, and then Confucianism, and finally Christianity.

Taoism and Donghak also influenced the religious tradition though to a lesser extent. Likewise, each religion constitutes a paradigm of distinguishable phenomena, organically inter-related and constantly in the process of inner transformation as they interact with the other religious paradigms of Korean culture. In brief, the religious structure of Korea is quite distinctive, not only because each religion once played a predominant role and then lost that power, but also because each is still active as a formative factor in the layered structure of today.

2.1. Shamanism

2.1.1. Its History and Influence

Shamanism⁹ was the religion of the ancient nation of *Kojoseon* which existed on the Korean peninsula from 2333 B.C.¹⁰ mentioned in the story of Tan-gun (檀君)¹¹ the founding mythology of *Kojoseon*. *Taebak* Mountain (태백산), which refers to a high place and the rebirth story of a bear in a cave, was adored as the mother earth spirit, reveals shamanistic influence.¹² Moreover, ancient Korean people believed that all daily works of human beings are closely connected to a god or a spirit, and there were various ceremonies to contact various spirits, individually or on a national scale. The records show the following:

In *Buyeo* (부여), there was a sacrificial rite for Heaven comprising of eating, drinking,

⁹ Shamanism is generally called as '*Musok* (巫俗)' in Korean language. However, the term '*Musok*' is also associated with the lower classes of the *Chonson* (조선) period which was an aristocratic society adapting not so much the very meaning than the customs of Confucianism. Therefore, the contemporary religious scholars avoid this term and prefer to use the term '*Mugyo* (巫敎)' or '*Mu* (巫)'. However, shamans use '*Mu*' meaning their various religious customs, each of which has its own name; See Heungyun Cho, "Mugyo Sasangsa (무교 사상사, History of Mugyo Thought)", *Hanguk Chonggyo sasangsa IV* (한국 종교사상사, History of Religious Thought in Korea), (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1992), 223-5.

¹⁰ *Tan-gun* mythology (단군신화) as being written in *Samkugryusa* (삼국유사), which is one of the first Korean ancient history books, has been widely known as the founding mythology of the first Korean ancient country, *Kojoseon*. See Jonguk Lee, *Kojoseonsa Ryeongu* (고조선사연구, Study of the History of Kojoseon), (Seoul: Iljogak, 1994), 11-57.

¹¹ See Dongsik Ryu, *Hanguk Mugyo ui Yeoksa wa Kujo* (한국 무교의 역사와 구조, History and Structure of Shamanism in Korea), (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1975), 27-35; Neunghwa Lee, "Choseon Musokgo (조선무속고, The Study of Mu in Choseon)", *Gyemyeong*, vol. 19, (1929).

¹² Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Kangjoa Hanguk Cheolhak* (강좌 한국철학, A Lecture of Korean Philosophy), (Seoul: Yemun Seowon, 1997), 111.

singing, and dancing in the twelfth month of the lunar calendar, and it was called ‘*Yeongko* (迎鼓, Welcome Drum)’, and prisoners were freed at that time. When it is necessary to raise soldiers, there was also a sacrificial rite to Heaven.” “In *Koguryeo* (고구려), they liked to offer a sacrificial ceremony to Heaven in October and had a great assembly, it was called ‘*Dongmaeng* (東盟, East Vow)’.” “In *Ye* (예), there was a sacrifice to Heaven with drinking, singing, and dancing day and night in every October, it was called ‘*Mucheon* (舞天, Dance of Heaven)’.”¹³

The tribal countries in ancient Korea practiced sacrifices to Heaven, and they served Heaven as a god or a spirit that rules all earthly things. During the ceremonies, they ate, drank, sang, and danced, which is conceived as the reconciliatory rite of Shamanism.¹⁴ To believe in spirits that are transcendent and to make *Gut* (굿, Ceremony) by *Mu* (巫, Shaman) between a transcendent being and humanity are also considered to be typical elements of Shamanism. The shamanistic ceremonies as individual or social exercises widely influenced the ancient Korea, and since then a spiritual or transcendental being has been universally recognised in the minds of Korean people.

Shamanism as a popular belief played a significant role, both politically and religiously, in ancient *Kojoseon* society. It continued until the early *Samguk* (Three Kingdoms) era (57 B.C. – A.D. 685), and it was gradually transformed in the process of societal development. When the period of the Three Kingdoms began to reinforce the centralisation of sovereign power, Shamanism was weakened by the newly arrived traditions of Buddhism and Confucianism, which played more prominent roles in Three Kingdoms’ politics. Shamanism lost its position as the religion of the state, and was satisfied with maintaining its influence through fortune-telling or advising kings.¹⁵ However, the newly arrived Buddhism and Confucianism could not cast away Shamanism which had already been deeply rooted into people’s daily lives, rather they were indigenised on this soil. As a result, many among the believers of Buddhism and

¹³ *Hwuhanseo* (後漢書), vol. 85, ‘*Dongyiyejeon* (東夷列傳)’. This is one of Korean ancient history books.

¹⁴ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Kangjoa Hanguk Cheolhak* (Lecture of Korean Philosophy), 112.

¹⁵ See Busik Kim, Pyeongdo Lee, ed., *Samguksagi* (삼국사기, Historical Record of Three Kingdoms), (Seoul: Ury Munhwasa, 1974).

Confucianism had a tendency of pursuing shamanistic fortune. The rapid expansion of the thought of the Pure Land (정토사상) of Buddhism, which dreamed of a land of Buddhism realised in Korea, the appearance of *Gungye* (궁예), who insisted to present himself as a Maitreya (미륵보살) the future Buddha, and particularly *Palkwanhwoi* (팔관회, The Assembly of Eight Prohibitions), which prevailed from the era of *Silla* until the era of *Koryeo*, which consists of eight Buddhist regulations for day and night and was a sacrificial ceremony of Buddhism to Heaven, might be examples of the indigenisation of Buddhism upon the soil of Shamanism.¹⁶ Under the influence of Shamanism, these Buddhist events were transformed into popular festivals with drinking, singing, and dancing. Shamanism maintained its vitality combining with other religions in the social or religious structure. This shows that Shamanism retained the capacity to impact every aspect of peoples' lives regardless of their social strata.

During the era of *Koryeo* (A.D. 918-1392), Shamanism enjoyed a new prime. Due to the religious coexistence policy of *Koryeo*, Shamanism re-emerged as a national religion, and was widely supported by the ordinary people of the time. When the king, *Yinjong* (인종) gathered shamans, according to records, three hundred shamans came at once, which shows the influence of Shamanism in the society of *Koryeo*.¹⁷ However, as Confucianism was introduced from China in the late *Koryeo* era, Shamanism was confronted by Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism. With its high esteem of virtue, courtesy, and rites, Confucianism was hostile to the shamanistic ceremonies associated with the festivals of eating, drinking, and dancing, and as a consequence Shamanism was branded as a false religion, called *Musok* and began to be suppressed.

When the *Choseon* (조선) dynasty was established after the fall of the *Koryeo* (고려) dynasty, Shamanism and Buddhism were strictly oppressed and Confucianism was embraced as the ruling ideology. Performing shaman rituals was banned in public and shamans were ranked as the lowest class people in society. In this strictly classified

¹⁶ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Kangjoa Hanguk Cheolhak* (Lecture of Korean Philosophy), 113.

¹⁷ Ibid., 113-4.

society, shamans were treated with contempt, and their ceremonial performances were considered as mysterious superstition.¹⁸ However, Shamanism was not entirely rejected and it was not possible to wipe it out, because its influence was widely rooted in people's lives. Shamanism maintained its presence among Confucian rituals. In particular, the worship of Heaven and *Gillye* (吉禮, Congratulatory Ceremony) were still carried out. Moreover, Shamanism as a way of curing diseases was highly recognised and continued to be practised by women, especially by the wives of those bearing high or low offices.¹⁹ Under Japanese colonialism, the oppression of Shamanism continued. Recognising that Shamanism was the foundation of Korean religion and culture, the colonial government tried to eliminate it as part of the colonial policy of so-called 'culture annihilation', which sought to impose Japanese Shinto religion. Most of the shamans were arrested or investigated by the Japanese police. The Japanese colonial government denounced Shamanism, claiming that it was superstition and demon worship.²⁰ Nevertheless, Shamanism was so deeply rooted in the national culture that it could not be uprooted.

In the late 19 century and the early 20 century, western missionaries, who came to Korea, also had a negative impression of Shamanism. As Charles A. Clark, who was one of the Presbyterian missionaries in Korea, in his book 'Religions of Old Korea', accused Korean Shamanism of not having concepts of the Ultimate God, morality, and human guilt.²¹ Accordingly, they insisted on eradicating Shamanism, and all ceremonial worship of spirits by shamans was condemned as idolatry. Ironically, some Korean Christians still go to shamans to ask the will of a spirit before they make a decision concerning an important matter.²² They do not sense a great hostility between the Christian God and shamanistic spirits exactly because of the deep and old influence of

¹⁸ Heungyun Cho, "Mugyo Sasangsa (무교 사상사, History of Mugyo Thought)", 277-8.

¹⁹ Ibid., 300.

²⁰ Heungyun Cho, *Hanguk ui Mu* (한국의 무, Shamanism of Korea), (Seoul: Minjok Munhwasa, 1983), 26.

²¹ Charles. A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea*, (New York: Flemming Revell Co., 1929), 173-219.

²² Dongsik Ryu, *Hangukjongkyo wa Gidokkyo* (한국종교와 기독교, Korean Religion and Christianity), (Seoul: Gidokkyo Seohwoi, 1965), 120.

Shamanism rooted in Korean mentality. Rather, they seem to conceive them as being part of a hierarchical harmony between the Great Spirit (the Christian God) and the small spirits (shamanistic spirits). In the modern period, there has been an effort to rediscover Korean Shamanism not as an uncivilised, false belief or superstition but as the traditional religion of a nation that goes back to the beginnings of Korean history. This effort was mainly undertaken by social or religious scholars or researchers, who tried to restore an accurate understanding of Korean Shamanism.²³ It cannot be denied that Shamanism considerably influenced the foundation of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity.²⁴

The typical rite of Shamanism is *Gut* (굿, Shaman's ritual exorcism). *Gut* is a ceremony and a meeting space of spirit, shaman, and believer. When believers go to ask the shaman about their matters, the shaman performs a *Gut*. *Gut* is the basic and primary rite of Shamanism, and is the only way to communicate with a spirit. While a *Gut* is performed, there is singing, dancing, and offerings to defuse the anger of a spirit and make him happy. The shaman becomes possessed by a spirit and learns the will of the spirit through exorcism and transmits that to the customer. The Chinese character of the term 'Mu (巫, Shaman)'²⁵ is interpreted as a performing man/woman who establishes a connection between heaven (spirit) and earth (human being) plausibly expressing the whole phenomenon of Shamanism.²⁶ Thus a *Gut* is a symbolic expression of the union of heaven, earth, and human being.

²³ The new understanding of Shamanism mainly centred on 'Choseo Musokgo (Shamanism in Choseon, 1927)' by Neunghwa Lee, 'Bulam Munhwaron (Cultural Theory of Bulam, 1928)' by Namseon Choi, 'Choseon Singa Yupyeon (Study of Sprit in Choseon, 1930)' by Jintae Son.

²⁴ Dongsik Ryu, *Hangukjongkyo wa Gidokkyo* (한국의종교와 기독교, Korean Religion and Christianity), 123.

²⁵ According to Chinese epigraphy, the term *Mu* (巫) means a woman who is inspired and worships an intangible being with singing and dancing. The Chinese character for *Mu* consists of two lines as high and low (一, 乚) which means Heaven and Earth, one stroke (丨) which connects the two lines as a 'Cosmic Tree' [M. Eliade, *Pattern in Comparative Religion*, (New York: Meridian Books, 1963), 70-1] and a pillar, and two symbols (人, 人) which indicates dancing persons by the pillar.

²⁶ Heungyun Cho, "Mugyo Sasangsa", 225. See also C. A. Clark, *Religions of Old Korea*, 173; Shamanism in the context of Korea in terms of its nature and structure is identical with the one of Manchuria and Siberia, apart from the historical background which is different.

In the cosmology of Shamanism, there are three distinctive features: belief in an all-powerful Reality, harmony of all things, and instant solution to humans' metaphysical problems. Shamanism has a strong belief in a powerful Reality that overcomes human limitations and fulfills human life. Although this powerful Reality does not imply a god who created all things, all aspects of human lives are closely connected to this powerful Reality and absolutely depend on it. In Shamanism, every single phenomenon of human activity in social, political, and economic terms, as well as relationships between people and nature, depend on the powerful reality that is spirit, and need the approval of this all-powerful Reality.²⁷ The term *Mu* clearly depicts the function of shamans, who mediate between the spiritual and human worlds. Secondly, the principle of harmony is demonstrated in the shaman's ritual exorcism. In Shamanistic cosmology, problems stem from disharmony between the spiritual, natural, and human world. Problems are solved through the restoration of harmony which happens through the *Gut* ritual. It is conceived that reality is connected to Heaven and Earth.²⁸ Therefore, the ultimate function of Shamanism is to restore the harmonious relationship between spirit, humanity, and nature. This harmony seeking mentality later became a basis for accommodating various religions and thoughts over time, and a power to maintain different religious identities throughout Korean history.²⁹ Finally, Shamanism reveals an instant answer to humans' problems. *Gut* is the gate through which one enters the spiritual world, beyond human intellect and ethics, beyond time and space.³⁰ In this manner, the shaman through *Gut* provides an immediate answer to the problems of disease, suffering, anxiety, death, and mystery through healing, freeing from suffering, resolving and accepting mystery, and alleviating the fear of death. Engaging with the psychosomatic causes of physical diseases or problems, the shaman treats the world of human fears and desires providing spiritual remedies through *Gut*. One of the basic

²⁷ Chinhong Jeong, *Jongkyo Munhwa ui Ihae* (종교문화의 이해, Understanding of the Culture of religion), (Seoul: Jeongyeonsa, 1996), 179.

²⁸ Heungyun Cho, "Mugyo Sasangsa", 236.

²⁹ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Kangjoa Hanguk Cheolhak* (Lecture of Korean Philosophy), 114-5.

³⁰ Cheonsik Choi, *Hanguk ui Jongkyo Munhwaro Ikneunda* (한국의 종교 문화로 읽는다, To Read Korean Religion by Culture), (Seoul: Sagyejeol, 1998), 78.

treatments is blessing and a formula of magical power that restores the harmony which has been broken or lost in the believer's life. This is the reason why Shamanism is not considered as an abstract inquiry into metaphysical matters, rather as a concrete religion which human beings experience in daily life in the manner of the coexistence of spirits. Based on this instant and specific response to problems in everyday life, Shamanism has been able to maintain its vitality and popularity through many centuries. Shamanism has substantially influenced the practice of the other religions, and is a pervasive religion which shapes the core of religious mentality of Korean people.

2.1.2. Ecological Elements in Shamanism

Ecological elements in Shamanism are found in the belief of the spiritual world and the recognition of the connection between spirit and humanity, human being and human being, human being and nature.

One of the typical characteristics of Shamanism is to believe in the world of the spirit (or god) that controls the realities of life. It is believed that the physical world is closely connected to the spiritual world, and difficulties or misfortunes derive from an interruption of the connection. *Gut* restores the relationship between the physical world and the spiritual one. The ceremony of Shamanism has three main characters: shaman, believer, and spirit. The person, who is possessed by a spirit, becomes a shaman, generally this ability is passed down through generations of a family. Traditionally, most of the shamans are women. Shamans were taught singing, dancing, and various kinds of performance by the mother shaman from an early age on. They lived in their own temple house, and normally had a picture or a mirror where they believed the spirit lived. There were many spirits that they believed in. It is conceived that many spirits including supernatural, natural, or humanistic have their own business according to a hierarchical order, and they exist in various objects such as mountains, lakes, trees, stones, things, human beings etc. Therefore, various things or places were treated as sacred objects, which indicate that the natural world could not be naturally recognised as something humans can freely use to their own benefit.

Shamanism has sustained its social influence through a number of practices such as fortune-telling and prophecy, physical healing, and the *Gut* ceremony. People often sought the will of a spirit regarding their various personal or business matters, which in turn helped to relieve tension and difficulties arising from the uncertainty. As well as that, people believed that all diseases or difficulties were a result of disharmony between the will of the spirit and the will of the believer. By performing the *Gut*, the shaman was able to appease the spirit and restore the harmony between the spirit and the believer. The belief in spirits prevented the society of the believers from becoming overly anthropocentric and disrespectful of the spirits who existed in everything. This belief consequently ensured a harmonious relationship between human beings and other existences, and helped to preserve the natural world from human greed.

Performing a *Gut* was also a public event in which people were keen to take part. The *Gut* could be organised locally, or nationwide and it united the people who attended the *Gut*, providing a sense of identity and belonging.³¹ That is, the ceremony of *Gut* did not only mend the relationship between spirit and human being but also led to social solidarity between human beings. There were rituals for rain (祈雨祭), and for earth and heaven (山天祭) on a national scale. These ceremonies were for the protection and prosperity of the nation. There were *Gut* for the royal family and ordinary people, they were performed for peace and blessing of the royal family and people. It was conceived that heaven, earth, rain, etc., were closely connected to human life, and the natural world was mysterious and respectable. Therefore, to obey the will of spirit and to adapt to the law of nature become an indispensable condition for human life in a Shamanistic world.

2.2. Buddhism

2.2.1. The History and Influence of Buddhism

Buddhism was formed in the sixth century B.C. in India. It reached China in the first

³¹ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa* (한국철학사상사, Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), (Seoul: Hanul Academy, 1997), 34-5.

century A.D. and Korea in the fourth century A.D. during the era of the Three Kingdoms.³² The Three Kingdoms were in the process towards statehood and they soon adapted Buddhism which contributed to the establishment of the national ideology and social ethics which formed the basis of ancient states.³³ Shamanism was popular at the time, but it had its limitations when it came to accommodate to a more complex and larger society. At the same time, the ruling dynasty recognised the usefulness of Buddhism in their endeavour to centralise power and establish a state. Thus, the dynasty encouraged the spread of Buddhism into all layers of society. Although Confucianism was already present at the time, its influence was not significant in any way. Buddhism soon became the dominant religion over Shamanism, Confucianism, etc. The ruling class mainly depended on this imported Buddhism, but the belief of ordinary people generally was expressed in a modified Buddhism associated with Shamanism.³⁴ Buddhism was also an indispensable passage regarding cultural exchange between Korea and the rest of Asia including China, India, and Middle Asia. Its instruments were travelling monks who brought Buddhist scriptures and passed down knowledge of foreign cultures³⁵ Buddhism influenced politics, culture, education and other aspects of the society as well as religion.

The Buddhism that reached Korea was different from the one that originated in India: it was the Mahayana (大乘佛教) or 'the Great Vehicle' form of Buddhism which emphasises the belief in the salvation of all people rather than a law for individual salvation.³⁶ It was developed through various indigenous schools of thought in China,

³² Buddhism came into Three Kingdoms' era Korea from Jin's (秦) era China, it was *Koguryeo* in A.D. 372, *Baeje* in A.D. 384, and *Silla* in A.D. 528. It was introduced as sending Buddhist monks to the Korean dynasties by the Chinese dynasty. See Byeongjo Jeong, "Bulkyo Sasangsa (불교사상사, History of Buddhist Thought), *Hanguk Jongkyo Sasangsa I* (한국종교사상사 I, History of Religious Thought in Korea I), (Seoul: Yonse University Press, 1992), 7-8.

³³ Myeongki Cho, ed., *Hanguk Sasang ui Simcheung* (한국사상의 심층, The Depths of Korean Thought), (Seoul: Useok, 1996), 78.

³⁴ Myeongki Cho, ed., *Hanguk Sasang ui Simcheung* (The Depths of Korean Thought), 79.

³⁵ Ibid. 79.

³⁶ Buddhism has two main branches: Mahayana and Hinayana. Mahayana calls the 'Great Vehicle' because its teachings enable all beings to attain Buddhahood. It lays particular emphasis upon the bodhisattva, who vows to attain Buddhahood for himself and to assist all others to do so. The Mahayana teachings arose around the first century B.C. and spread to China, Tibet, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Hinayana calls the 'Lesser Vehicle', it is used by followers of the Mahayana teachings to designate the

and reached Korea, where it soon began to flourish. Particularly, the most receptive among the Three Kingdoms was *Silla* (新羅). The royal family was called ‘king is a Buddha’ regarded themselves as sacred, and some members of the royal family became Buddhist monks. Many temples were built and the hierarchical system of Buddhism was applied nationwide by the order of king, so Buddhism became a well structured national religion in *Silla*.³⁷ It was the Kingdom of *Silla* that first cherished the idea of unifying the three kingdoms. Two Buddhist ideologies prevailed at the time that served as a basis for unification. A monk called Jajang (자장), who insisted that *Silla* was a land of Buddhism and its people were Buddhists, presented the ideology of the ‘Buddhist Land (佛國土思想)’. Therefore, if there was to be a unification it should be led by *Silla*. The second thought, advocated by Avatamska (華嚴思想) was that ‘one is many and many are one (一卽多, 多卽一)’, which implies harmony between all things and the universe. This thought was to alleviate hostility and confrontation between countries, and human beings, and it soon became an intellectual basis for the ultimate unification of the Three Kingdoms as one country and one people. An additional idea can be found in ‘*Hwarangdo* (花郎道, The Code of *Silla* Chivalry)’. The members of the chivalry were young men with intrepid spirit who travelled the mountains and the rivers finding delight in singing and dancing. They were proud of their loyalty towards the royals and practiced filial piety. Loyalty and piety were the ethical standard expected of the young men who were trained in knowledge, ethics and physical strength in order to become fit for political office. Their hobby revealed Shamanistic elements, their mental and physical strength demonstrated Buddhist influence, and they practiced Confucian ethics. The *Hwarangdo* was unique in the sense that it was a merge between three religions. It became the crucial force that later led the unification of Three Kingdoms. The *Hwarangdo* is a typical example of the multi religious structure in Korea.

other major branch of Buddhism, such as Theravada (Teaching of the Elders). Hinayana teaches that, since buddhahood is almost impossible to attain, one should aim for a ‘lesser’ goal, that of arhat. It is form of Buddhism that prevails today in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, where it is known as Theravada (The Teachings of the Elders). In detail, see The Buddhist Text Editing Committee, *Bulkyo Sasang ui Yihae* (불교사상의 이해, Understanding of Buddhist Thought), (Seoul: Dongkuk University Buddhist Culture College, 1997), 127-37.

³⁷ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa*, (Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), 64.

The unification of the Three Kingdoms offered an opportunity to integrate Three Kingdom's Buddhism with mainland China's Buddhism and to develop Korean Buddhism's philosophical system. During the *United Silla* (통일신라) period Buddhism was at the height of its prosperity, power and influence. The number of temples and monks rose, some monks became noblemen holding administrative positions in the government, advising the king as national Buddhists (國統). As well as that, numerous monks travelled to China, India and to other parts of the Buddhist world seeking knowledge of Buddhist law and studying scriptures which they took back to Korea further enriching culture and scholarship. The most prominent monks of the period were Wonhyo (원효, 617-686), Uisang (의상, 625-702), Woncheuk (원측, 613-696) who made significant advances in reinterpreting Buddhism in the Korean context.

Wonhyo's greatest contribution was to provide the thought of '*Hwajaeng* (和諍, Reconciliation and Harmony)' aiming to unite various scriptural and doctrinal arguments of his time. There were exhaustive arguments between two major denominations of Buddhism about various scriptures and doctrines. Wonhyo realised that there was a need for a fundamental reinterpretation of the original scriptures. He consequently produced about two hundred books. He compiled most of the important scriptures of Buddhism which reflected his universal (or holistic) and syncretistic (or harmonic) philosophy of Buddhism. Through this effort, he sought to draw out the unity of principle that underlies the diversity of doctrines.³⁸ This philosophical thought is apparent in his commentary, '*Awakening of Faith* (大乘起信論)' and '*Exposition of the Adamantine Absorption Scripture* (金剛三昧經)'.³⁹ The ultimate purpose of *Hwajaeng* (화쟁, Reconciliation and Harmony) is to return to One Mind (一心).⁴⁰ The other dimension of his greatness was his pragmatic public oriented thinking. His thought

³⁸ Myeongki Cho, ed., *Hanguk Sasang ui Simcheung* (The Depths of Korean Thought), 91.

³⁹ See Peter H. Lee, *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization I*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 145-158.

⁴⁰ One mind means the united harmony of existence and non-existence with being freed from the dualistic aspects of these two. In this thought, Wonhyo manifests his indebtedness to the Mahayana idea that the myriad of existent things have their neither 'reality (實體)' nor 'self (自我)' in the Void (空) of the Ultimate. See Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa*, (Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), 71.

provided a principle to overcome difference between worldly truth and transcendental truth. He realised that the Buddhism of his time was merely a religion of the nobles and the royal families who made very little effort to make Buddhism accessible to the general public. He renounced all his privileges as a Buddhist monk and went among the people and lived with them for the rest of his life as educating them in Buddhist practice. Reconciliation of all doctrines, all people, and doctrine and practice, is the key of his thought, and he greatly contributed to the formation of ‘Hua-yen school or Flower Garland school (華嚴宗, Avatamska school)’ of Chinese Buddhism. Wonhyo proclaimed himself an ‘unhindered man’, who sought to reinterpret the truth of Buddhism in a theory and practice appropriate to the Korean context. In this manner, he laid the foundations of Korean Zen Buddhism, which arrived in the era of *Koryeo* from China, known in Korean as *Seonjong* (禪宗)⁴¹. When it came to Korea in the ninth century, it provided an attractive alternative to the prevailing *Kyojong* (教宗), which was characterised by an elaborate system of dogma and had difficulty in putting its intricate theory into practice. In this manner, *Kyojong* Buddhism had little chance to be introduced to the common people, *Seonjong*, by contrast, laid its emphasis on immediate awakening by ascetic practicing of discipline, and meditation rather than theoretical investigation. Therefore, *Seonjong* greatly contributed to the popularity of Buddhism among the ignorant common people, and enabled those who did not know Buddhist scriptures or doctrines to be enlightened, emphasising Buddha-nature⁴² as the principle. Its appeal to meditation over and against the study of scriptures is what distinguishes *Seonjong* from Mahayana (大乘) Buddhism of China. It is possible to say that Wonhyo was Korea’s first *Seonjong* Buddhist monk.

Uisang and Woncheuk, who studied in China, founded the ‘Flower Garland School (華嚴宗, Avatamska school)’ and the ‘Mind Only School (유식학파, Vijñāptimatra

⁴¹ *Seonjong* (선종) as Dhyana Buddhism is the general name for all schools of Buddhism that places particular emphasis on the practice of meditation as the way to enlightenment. On the contrary, *Kyeojong* (교종) endeavours dogmatic studies for the way of enlightenment.

⁴² According to the Mahayana view, Buddha-nature is the true, immutable, and eternal nature of all things. Since all beings possess this Buddha-nature, it is possible for them to attain enlightenment and become a Buddha, regardless of what level of existence they occupy.

school)' as the development of Korean Mahayana Buddhism. These schools were part of the *Kyjong* Buddhism and focused on the meaning of scriptures and religious precepts, and greatly contributed to the doctrinal and academic development of Korean Buddhism. In particular, the thought of 'Flower Garland' (華嚴思想) became the foundation of *Seonjong* (禪宗) in the era of *Koryeo*.⁴³ It claimed the equality of all things and the dependence of all things on one another, and that all things participate in a unity and this unity divides itself into many, so that the manifold is unified in it. Therefore, it said that all things possess six characteristics: universality, specificity, similarity, distinctness, integration, and differentiation.⁴⁴ Jinul (지눌, 1153-1210) was the monk who founded *Seonjong* on the basis of the 'Flower Garland Scripture'. Jinul drew a distinction between the words of Buddha, which developed into the doctrinal teaching of Buddhism, and the mind of Buddha, which was devoted to meditation and discipline. He showed that the truths of various teachings of Buddhism are the same, coming from one Buddha including both the doctrinal teaching through scriptures and the mystical knowledge or experience through meditation or awakening. This integrated teaching of the 'Flower Garland' with *Seonjong* meditation revealed an indigenous Korean harmonisation which was distinct from Chinese Zen Buddhism. *Seonjong* became a tradition of Korean Buddhism.

During the period of *Koryeo*, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism were maintained for the country's benefit.⁴⁵ Buddhism influenced people's mentality, while Confucianism provided an educational ideology to maintain people's morality. However, from the 13th century, the development of Buddhism and the flourishing of reform movements came to a halt. The political class became corrupt and abused its power and influence, which resulted in the loss of credibility of Buddhism itself. In this respect,

⁴³ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa*, (Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), 76-7.

⁴⁴ See The Buddhist Text Editing Committee, *Bulkyo Sasang ui Yihae* (Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 214-43.

⁴⁵ "Choi Seungro Peon (최승로편, Study of Seungro Choi)", *Koryeosa* (고려사, History of *Koryeo*), vol. 93. See Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa*, (Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), 97.

Buddhism, lost its leadership, which lasted for about a millennium: from the 4th century to the 14th century, in the process of change from the era of *Koryeo* (A.D. 918 – 1392) to the one of *Choseon* (1392 – 1910). Buddhism was oppressed during the period of *Choseon*, during which Confucianism became the ideological foundation of the state. All privileges were taken away from the public by the Confucian government and the numbers of temples and monks were strictly limited. Buddhism in the period of *Choseon* lost its social position and respect; was pushed into the mountains and their believers became mainly women and members of the lower classes. The Confucians may have delighted in condemning Buddhism as the ally of *Musok*. However, at the popular level Buddhism ensured its survival as the religion of the people especially for the lower classes similar to Shamanism during the Three Kingdom's era. During this period, Buddhism sought to reconcile with Confucianism in order to survive. The thought of Reconciliation and Unification of Confucianism and Buddhism(儒佛回通論) was attempted by both sides. This effort in Buddhism was based on the thoughts of *Hwajaeng* (화쟁) of Wonhyo and *Hwawom* (華嚴, the Flower Garland) in *Seonjong* Buddhism by Jinul, emphasising harmonisation and union. Although the result of this effort was not immediately apparent, it was enough to open the people's recognition of religious reconciliation.

Korean Buddhism, for about one thousand years, continuously evolved in a uniquely indigenous way distinct from the one of China or India. It was a synthetic religion, accumulating within its own history a diversity of schools of Buddhist thought and practice that had divided Buddhism elsewhere. Moreover, by integrating the ancient tradition of Shamanism in its popular practice and the new coming Confucianism in its ideological direction as a religion of the country and people, it rooted itself in the life of the people in a way that was able to maintain its vitality and identity amid the change of political fortune. After all, it can be said that Korean Buddhism was formed into an integrated Buddhism with '*Seonjong* (선종, Korean Zen Buddhism)' in its centre.

2.2.2. Ecological Elements of Buddhism

Buddhist monks spent most of their time in temples located in mountain recesses so they could practice physical and spiritual discipline, for temples provided a suitable environment for preventing any artificial interference from the secular world. In the depth of the mountains, they devoted themselves to the awakening, through worshipping before the image of Buddha, meditating and reading scriptures. Mountains, water, trees, plant, animals and insects became close subjects of meditation or awakening in their daily life, and it is no doubt that many Buddhist teachings have referred to various natural things as examples of the way of life. Nature has always been an endearing subject for Buddhism. Furthermore, Buddhist monks' lives were permeated by diligence and economy. They always upheld the principle of 'no possession (無所有)'. They always wore the same grey garments and had simple meals. The principle of 'no possession' as a typical life-style of Buddhism influenced believers, and simplicity, diligence and economy became significant values in their life.

Another Buddhist thought relating to nature is the doctrine of 'do not destroy life'. Therefore, Buddhist monks preferred a vegetarian diet. They used a walking stick in order to avoid any unconscious killing of insects while they walked. They believed that all forms of life were connected in a rotation of life, and all would be reborn in the next world. Therefore, no life could be ignored in the connectivity of life, and all lives should be preserved. Moreover, all existences have a Buddha's mind in them, and all should be equally respected, even though their external bodies have different forms according to the principle of cause, condition, and effect (因緣果). The respect for all lives is the old tradition and the significant ecological aspect of Buddhism.

2.3. Confucianism and Taoism

2.3.1. History and Influence of Confucianism

There are still arguments about the time of the very first introduction of Confucianism into Korea, but it is no doubt that the full-scale inflow of Confucianism from China was the period of Three Kingdoms, even before the arrival of Buddhism. While Buddhism became state religion in the period of Three Kingdoms and the United *Silla*, the

influence of Confucianism was present in people's ethical practice. There are two types of Confucianism: classic Confucianism which was present before the late *Koryeo* era and did not become a nationwide religion, and Neo-Confucianism which became influential after the late *Koryeo* and followed the academic tradition of Chu-His (朱熹, 1130-1200).

As the ancient Korea was in the process of developing from a tribal society to an ancient state achieved by the Three Kingdoms, classic Confucianism provided the ethical framework between king and the lieges by endorsing virtues of benevolence and loyalty.⁴⁶ In particular, the models of the education system, bureaucracy, and social ethics were imported by Confucianism from China, greatly contributing to the formation of social structure of the ancient Korea. Especially, the ideas 'loyalty (忠)' and 'filial piety (孝)' of Confucianism as the most humanitarian principles in the society, determined the relationship between human beings. In this respect, Confucianism developed as a secular ethical standard, while Buddhism played as a resting place of the people's mind.⁴⁷ However, before the late *Koryeo* era, Confucianism did not develop into an independent systematic thought or religion; instead it offered a political ideology or an ethical platform.⁴⁸

The United *Silla* collapsed as a result of corruption of the ruling class, and was divided

⁴⁶ See Cheoljun Kim, "Samguksidae ui Yesok kwa Yukyosasang (삼국시대의 예속과 유교사상, Subordination in the era of Three Kingdoms and Thought of Confucianism)", *Daedong Munhwayeongu* (대동문화연구, Study of Great East Culture), vol. 6-7, 1970, 125.

⁴⁷ Jangtae Keum, "Yukyo Sasangsa (유교사상사, History of Thought of Confucianism)", *Hangukjongkyo Sasangsa II* (한국종교사상사, History of Religious Thought in Korea), (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1994), 9.

⁴⁸ In the period of the Unified *Silla* and *Koryeo*, there were activities of Confucians such as 'Recognition of Eastern People (동인의식)' which is based on the identical idea of the nation in order to enhance national pride. Chiwon Choi (857-?) as a Confucian was in the centre of this thought. He was well versed in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and he emphasised that they are fundamentally common in their origin though they express themselves in different ways. In other words, the source of these religions is the Korean indigenous thought, called '*Pungryudo* (풍류도, Elegance Way)', which can accommodate all religions and maintain harmony among them in peace. He emphasised the subjectivity of the Korean mentality, which united Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and suggested a new model, which can mould the different religions into one in the Korean mindset. This showed a Korean national characteristic despite being Confucian, and the way that Confucianism should be adopted in the Korean context.

into the Post Three Kingdoms again. The Post Three Kingdoms were reunited by Wangkeon (왕건, 877-943) and the era of *Koryeo* began. The transition period proved to have historical and religious significance. The reunification of the Three Kingdoms was based on the *Han* (韓) people, referring to the people of the Korean peninsula. It meant that the traditions of the Three Kingdoms such as historical records, cultures, or religions could be relatively fairly dealt with as their peculiar inheritances in the process of passing from the ancient times to the middle ages of Korea.⁴⁹ Moreover, it ensured that all religions were treated fairly by the dynasty of *Koryeo*. The first king, *Taejo* (태조, the Great King), enacted the law (훈요십조) which was based on three religions, which were Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, and created political and social stability through the harmonisation and union of religions. In this respect, Confucianism had a chance to grow as a national religion or thought to replace the materialised and corrupted Buddhism. Especially, many intellectuals in politics, culture, and education were involved in Confucianism. Moreover, as the governing principles of *Koryeo*, Confucianism was mainly used in the spheres of education, academia, and ethics as philosophy not as religion.⁵⁰ ‘*Samguksaki* (삼국사기, Record of the Three Kingdom’s History)’ by Busik Kim (김부식) is one of the most significant and oldest books about Korean history and was written in a Confucian perspective, was the finest achievement of Confucianism of that time.⁵¹

Neo-Confucianism, which was established by the Sung dynasty in China (宋, A.D. 906-1279), came to Korea in the late *Koryeo* era, firmly rooted itself as a philosophy and religion integrating Taoist and Buddhist concepts. Based on the ontological concepts of ‘*Taegeuk* (太極, the Supreme Ultimate)’ and ‘*Liki* (理氣, the Principle and Material Force)’, and on ‘*Simseongjeon* (心性情, Mind, Nature, and Will)’, principles of humanity, Neo-Confucianism started to develop its metaphysics, theories, and

⁴⁹ Dongjun Lee, *Hanguk Sasangsa Daegye* (한국사상사 대계, The Great Succession of History of Korean Thought), (Seoul: Hanguk JeongsinMunhwa Yeonguwon, 1990), 115.

⁵⁰ Yeongseong Choi, *Hanguk Yuhak Sasangsa I* (History of Confucian Thought in Korea), 213.

⁵¹ Ibid.

practices.⁵² Confucianism was referred to by different names according to their schools such as *Cheongjuhak* (程朱學, Chen-chu School), *Sunglihak* (性理學, Sung philosophy), *Myeonghak* (明學, Ming School), *Yukwanghak* (陸王學, Lu Wang School), and *Simhak* (心學, School of Mind). Neo-Confucianism was mainly established by the academic contribution of Chu Hsi (朱熹, 1130-1200), also called as *Chujahak* (朱者學, Chu Hsi School).⁵³ It provided an ideological foundation for rejecting Buddhism and establishing the *Choseon* dynasty, and soon became the official ideology of the state and the leading religion throughout the five hundred years of the *Choseon* dynasty (1392-1910). In other words, Neo-Confucianism politically became the reformed ideology underpinning mediaeval Korea, which formed a bureaucratic society over the old aristocratic society as a governing system.⁵⁴

Neo-Confucianism in the period of *Choseon* developed independently in the Korean context. It could be illustrated by two aspects in the arguments of *Liki* (理氣, Principle and Material Force) theory and its practice. The theory of *Liki* was one of the central philosophical problems of mediaeval Neo-Confucian thought. China had already engaged with the issue of the relationship between *Li* (理) as ‘principle’ and *Ki* (氣) as ‘material force’.⁵⁵ This debate continued in Korea through the arguments between Hwang Lee (○|황, 1501-1570) and Yi Lee (○|○|, 1536-1584), and it became a crucial motive to articulate the characteristic of Korean Neo-Confucianism. The interpretation of humanity and the universe, according to their point of emphasis *Li* (principle) or *Ki* (material force) in the central philosophy, was divided as *Juliron* (主理論, Principle Centralism) by Hwang Lee, and *Jukiron* (主氣論, Ki Centralism) by Yi Lee. They impacted on the respective understandings of *Sadan* (四端, the Four Beginnings), which

⁵² For details, see Sasun Yun, “Hanguk Seorihak ui Jeongae wa Teukjing (한국 성리학의 전개와 특징, Development and Characteristic of Korean Sung Confucianism)”, *Hanguk Sasang ui Simcheung* (The Depths of Korean Thought), 189-202.

⁵³ Ibid., 189-90.

⁵⁴ Choha Yu, *Hanguk Sasangsa ui Insik* (한국사상사의 인식, Recognition of the History of Korean Thought), (Seoul: Useok, 1996), 73.

⁵⁵ Hans Kūng & Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, (London: SCM Press, 1993), 82; Sasun Yun, “Hanguk Seongrihak ui Jeongae wa Teukjing (Development and Characteristic of Korean Sung Confucianism)”, *Hanguk Sasang ui Simcheung* (The Depths of Korean Thought), 194.

indicates *In* (仁, benevolence), *Ui* (義, righteousness), *Ye* (禮, propriety), and *Chi* (智, wisdom), and *Chiljeong* (七情, the Seven Feelings), which says *Hui* (喜, joy), *No* (怒, anger), *Ae* (愛, love), *Ku* (懼, fear), *Ae* (哀, sorrow), *O* (惡, hatred), and *Yok* (慾, desire).

Hwang Lee's thought ultimately focused on the establishment of dignity and absoluteness of 'principle' as emphasising *Li* (理) over *Ki* (氣). He maintained that *Sadan* (四端, the Four Beginnings) are issued by *Li* (principle) which is the flowing of *Ki* and *Chiljeong* (七情, the Seven Feelings). Therefore, *Sadan* is the original nature of humanity from birth which is always good, and *Chiljeong* is either good or evil. *Li* is the source of human mind, and Hwang Lee emphasised the moral principle to cultivate the human mind. *Li* is the source of all that is good, and everything outside *Li* is evil. This thought stemmed from his strong moral consciousness to remove all evils from human life through establishing a clear distinction between good and evil, and the cultivation of human mind by *Li*. This argument was not the same as the metaphysical reality *Li* of Chinese Neo-Confucianism, though they emphasised *Li* as a true reality. *Li* by the interpretation of Chu Hsi was regarded as a metaphysical reality or a conceptual existence not as the active agent that directly acts and leads all realities. Highlighting *Li*'s activity, Hwang Lee placed more emphasis on the human mind and nature as the source of morality. He suggested '*Kyeong* (敬, respect)' as the moral principle in order to exercise the original nature of the human mind. It implied a moral strictness and even stiffness of *Choseon*'s Neo-Confucianism.⁵⁶ Hwang Lee's influence, claiming that *Li* is noble and *Ki* is humble, and *Li* is the master and *Ki* is the servant, revealed that moral spirit, honour, dignity, reputation, or justification are more important than any other human needs. This characteristic of Chinese Neo-Confucianism has retained its presence in Korean Neo-Confucianism up to this day.

However, Yi Lee, who was much more flexible regarding the moral implication than Hwang Lee, argued that it is impossible to distinguish between *Li* and *Ki*. According to

⁵⁶ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Kangjoa Hanguk Cheolhak*, (A Lecture of Korean Philosophy), 160-1.

Yi Lee, the conceptual existence or metaphysical principle, *Li*, cannot act, for instance it could not fly over the universe. He defined *Li* as the guide of *Ki* and *Ki* as the material form of *Li*, and that all natural phenomena were revealed in *Ki*'s activity, which causes their movement, and *Li*'s subjectivity, which maintains their order. Hwang Lee formed his cosmology through the understanding of human mind, but Yi Lee recognised human nature through the understanding of the universe. Yi Lee insisted that *Sadan* and *Chiljeong* all are originated in *Ki* (material force) followed by *Li* (principle).⁵⁷ He denied the dualistic interpretation of *Li* and *Ki*, and insisted that they are inseparable, even though they can be distinguished for the purpose of intellectual clarification. While emphasising that *Li* and *Ki* are both one and two, Yi Lee also criticised Chu Hsi's Confucianism according to which *Li* and *Ki* were not regarded as inseparable.⁵⁸ While Hwang Lee adhered to the priority of *Li* as the Principle of the myriad of all things, Yi Lee understood *Li* and *Ki* as inseparable and complementary beings in reality. Both *Li* and *Ki* support the universe and humanity in equal proportion, thus were conceived in a mutual connectedness. In this respect, Yi Lee tried to harmonise principle and reality, and substance and activity in order to avoid confrontation between *Li* and *Ki*. This philosophical attitude led people to have more interest in the reality, and tried to solve problems of the reality by the harmonisation of principle and reality. On this philosophical basis, various national policies such as the strengthening of national defence, the development of economics, and the security of social justice were suggested, thus Confucianism developed into a practical science in the Korean context.⁵⁹ These two philosophical arguments point towards the Korean tradition of harmony and creativity.

One of the significant Confucian practices is the ancestral veneration. This ancestral veneration was the expression of filial piety through Confucian religious rite (제사, a ritual service), and reminded people the significance of their roots and human

⁵⁷ Ibid., 162-3.

⁵⁸ Peter H. Lee, *Sourcebook of Korean Civilisation I*, 635.

⁵⁹ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Kangjoa Hanguk Cheolhak*, (Lecture of Korean Philosophy), 164-5.

relationship which is connected to their ancestors, and the importance of family and filial piety which is the basis for human relationships. However, it was later regarded merely as idol worship by western Christian missionaries, who did not understand the ideas behind the practice. The Confucian ritual firmly exercised the ethic of filial piety within the family relationship, and this family relationship became a primary foundation on which society and the nation established itself.⁶⁰ However, women were excluded from the ritual (제사) and the leadership of a household: Confucianism gave the impression of being a male-dominant religion. Women of all classes mainly remained Shamanists or Buddhists, and their voices about these matters were hardly heard. It means that Shamanism and Buddhism were still widely practiced by commoners though Confucianism was dominant.

In the 17th century, the major interest of *Choseon*'s Confucian scholars shifted from *Sunglihak* (性理學, Mind and Principle School) to *Yehak* (禮學, Propriety School). This *Yehak* focused on the ceremonies of coming of age, marriage, funeral and ancestral veneration (冠婚喪祭), and its regulations were established to support concrete ethical practice. The fundamental spirit of propriety or morality was to follow the Principle of Heaven (or *Li*) as the source of all ethics. The Principle of Heaven was conceived as the original nature of humanity. The ultimate virtues of these regulations were based on fidelity and justification as principles humanity ought to follow in their daily life.⁶¹ The cultivation and education of the human original nature (mind) was the first priority regarding family, state, and the maintenance of peace in the world.⁶² Therefore, to control human instincts through self-restraint and to find a good nature or mind through adhering to the regulations became an important practice of Confucianism. In the practice of the propriety, the most important regulation was *Jongbeob* (宗法, Kinship

⁶⁰ For details see Chunsik Choi, *Hangukin ege Munhwaneun Itneunga* (한국인에게 문화는 있는가, Is There a Culture in Korea), (Seoul: Sagyejeol, 1997).

⁶¹ See Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa*, (Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), 217-27.

⁶² It calls *Susin-Jega-Chiguk-Pyeongcheoha* (修身濟家治國平天下, Culturing Morality-Managing Family-Governing a country- Peace Making the World)

Law).⁶³ This regulation became the basis of social order of the *Choseon* state, and it provided a patriarchal structure of the society. The privileges of the first-born son and the patriarch were strengthened among members of the family, and marriage between people who had the same surname, thus the same family origin, and re-marriage of widows were strictly prohibited.⁶⁴ The famous ethical practice of *Yehak*, ‘*Samgang Oryun* (三綱五倫, the Three Bonds and the Five Moral Disciplines in Human Relations)’⁶⁵, was produced and widely practiced. These virtues of Confucianism have still been influencing Korean mentality, though the patriarchal perspective substantially changed by the elevation of women’s right in the family structure.

2.3.2. Taoism

Although Taoism did not ever become a dominant religion in Korean history, its influence left marks on Korean culture. Taoism has been generally classified as a philosophy and as a religion. Taoist thought was based solely on the teachings of Lao-tzu in his book ‘*Tao-Te Ching* (道德經)’. Taoism as having a religious colour was revealed in the belief that one can have access to a supernatural power or a transcendental world after an awakening and cultivation of Tao. It has been conceived that the appearance of Taoism coincided with the arrival of Confucianism.⁶⁶ During the Three Kingdoms, Taoism was treated mainly as an ideology or topic of research concerning intellectuals. The most influential characteristic of Taoism at the time was the beautification of famous contemporary people such as great commanders,

⁶³ *Jongbeob* is the relative principle of the *Choseon* society and the ideological basis of the union of the lineage. It is a regulation to maintain the family and kinship through rankly distinguishing a class. In other words, *Jong* (宗) as the group of descendants who revere their ancestors, this regulation provides a basic structure of the ancestral veneration, and sets ranks in order of importance among attendants of relatives. Here women and sons-in-law were excluded from the group of the lineage. The regulation determined the status of the family members, and the ranking provided the basis for the reverence of the ancestors.

⁶⁴ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa*, (Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), 227.

⁶⁵ *Samgang* (三綱) means that there are three important bonds, which ought to do in ethics, between sovereign and subject, husband and wife, and father and son, and *Oryun* (五倫) as five moral disciplines indicates that there should be loyalty between sovereign and subject, intimacy between father and son, distinction between husband and wife, order between the youth and the aged, and fidelity between friends. These, as the most basic virtues in human relations, clearly showed the ethical practices of Confucianism.

⁶⁶ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa*, (Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), 86.

distinguished monks, and great Confucians, granting legendary status and miraculous power to them probably as means of preserving the memory of the great people of the time.⁶⁷

Taoism introduced two ideas into Korea: naturalism and mysticism. The tendency of naturalism as an escape from reality was mainly the result of the scepticism of literary circles concerning the centralisation of power by the dynasty of the time. Thus, in the *Koryeo* era it became popular among Confucian scholars, and many of them became hermits, especially in times of political crisis. Tendency towards mysticism was influenced by the theory of divination based on topography (풍수지리), which in this context means that mountains and lands have their own power over good and bad luck, and the belief in prophecy (도참) concerning life and death, fortune and misfortune. Taoism was consistent with the theories of *Ki* (氣), Yin and Yang, and the Five Elements (metal, wood, water, fire, and earth), and it was taught as the way of *Ki*.⁶⁸

The philosophical approach to Taoism was mainly attempted by Confucian scholars in the period of *Choseon* in order to prove that Taoism was heresy. However, many Confucian scholars realised that the thought of Lao-tzu, was not so different from the teachings of Confucianism regarding the cultivation and discipline of the self and the love of people and state. As a result, their opinion according to which Taoism was nihilistic, was modified, and they began to distinguish the thought of Lao-tzu as a philosophy from Taoism as a religion. Because they realised that Taoism as a religion deviated from the original thought of Lao-tzu.⁶⁹ However, the philosophical development of Taoism was limited by strong Confucian society. One of the interesting phenomena at that time was the theory of the harmonisation of three religions, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism (삼교회통론). Confucianism emphasised principle and reality, Buddhism mind and nature, and Taoism revealed *Ki* and change

⁶⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁶⁸ Seungguk Yu, *Hanguk Sasang kwa Hyeondae* (한국사상과 현대, Korean Thought and Today), (Seoul: Dongbang Haksul Yeonguwon, 1988), 381.

⁶⁹ See Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Kangjoa Hanguk Cheolhak*, (Lecture of Korean Philosophy), 207-15.

claiming that the three religions fundamentally have the same root and teachings. This idea of harmonisation was a result of the recognition of their coexistence in Korea and harmonisation was thought to be beneficial for the people and the state. Probably beyond this attempt, there seems to be the recognition that religion should be for the benefit of the people and the country, and not the other way round. Nevertheless, the presence of Taoism in Korea was relatively weak compared to the other religions, and has never become a dominant religion in Korean history.

2.3.3. Ecological Elements in Confucianism and Taoism

The thought of '*Muwijayeon* (無爲自然, doing nothing but self-so-ness)', which is one of the core thoughts in Taoism, refuses any artificial doing, rather, it emphasises a natural way of life which is the original nature of each existence as self-so-ness. The true way of life, which is *Tao*, is to live according to the original nature, but is not a way that can be obtained by human effort or artificial attempt. Therefore, the natural world was called '*Jayeon* (自然, nature)', which means self-so-ness, and is a Korean term. It is conceived that the fulfilment of *Tao* can only be achieved by the natural life-style, and those who attempt to awaken to *Tao* mostly preferred to stay at unfrequented mountain places. Nature itself was a teacher for believers, and became a subject of respect.

Unlike Taoism, Confucianism regarded various aspects of human life important. It was conceived that all things exist in relationship, and the main concern was to find and maintain just relationship through education and practice. It is evident in the concept of '*In* (仁, benevolence or perfect virtue)' which is the core thought of Confucianism. That is, the term '*In* (仁)' indicates that humanity (人) is between heaven (☰) and earth (☷), and exists in the inevitable relationships between heaven and earth, human being and human being: humanity does not exist independently, but co-exists in harmony with other beings. Therefore, Confucianism can be called as a religion which systemises all relationships. In this understanding, Confucianism says *Cheonjijisim* (天地之心, Heaven and earth are connected to the mind of human being), and Confucians believed that draught, famine, or disaster are caused by sin. They thought that the peace and

prosperity of the nation depend on the mind of the king, and the king should be benign and the lieges should be men of virtue. The natural world was not a mere physical aggregate separate from humanity, but an organic life, directly connected to the hearts of human beings.⁷⁰ Moreover, The Book of Change (주역) demonstrates the connectivity of all realities through the principles of ‘generation’, ‘change’, and ‘extermination’ by the eight signs of divination.⁷¹ The organic connectivity extends to the spiritual world as well as the physical. In fact, the spiritual world controls the physical world, and a moral personality is the core of all realities. Virtuous behaviour through the cultivation of the mind and education was required, which leads to a unified life between body and spirit, objects and the self. Although Confucianism emphasises virtuous life and mental cultivation and provides an ethical system that applies to all kinds of relationships, its direction is towards the ultimate unity of heaven, earth, and humanity.⁷²

3. Modern Religions of Korea

3.1. Donghak (東學, Eastern School)

3.1.1. Its History and Influence

Donghak was founded in 1860 by Jaewu Choi (1824-1864) as a reaction to foreign powers which tried to control the Korean peninsula politically and religiously. In the late *Chosŏn* the state reached the level of crisis as a result of the corruption of the ruling class and the economic exploitation of the lower classes by the noblemen. As well as that, China and Japan took notice of the weakness of the *Chosŏn* dynasty and they threatened to colonise Korea. The Confucian ideology of *Chosŏn* was not able to operate efficiently any more and the state was in great need for a new ideology that

⁷⁰ See Yeongjin Choi, “Yuhak esoui Jeongchi wa Jayeonkwan (유학에시의 정치와 자연관, Politics and a View of Nature in Confucianism)”, *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunje* (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Thought and Environmental Problem), by Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism, ed., (Seoul: Mosaek, 1996). 212-4.

⁷¹ The Book of Change understands all things through changes of eight signs (heaven, earth, light, mountain, fire, water, wind, river); See Shinhwan Kwak, “A View of Nature in the Book of Change (周易)”, *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunje* (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Thought and Environmental Problem), 228-9.

⁷² Yeongjin Choi, “Yuhak esoui Jeongchi wa Jayeonkwan (유학에서의 정치와 자연관, Politics and a View of Nature in Confucianism)”, 203-7.

could reflect and respond to the challenges it was facing. In this circumstance, the crisis of the national consciousness and the suffering of peasants consequently became the motives for the foundation of Donghak. Donghak spread rapidly among peasants and some intellectuals between 1860 and 1890.

Jaewu Choi saw that the power of the West originally derived from Christianity, and he felt the necessity for an eastern religion which might be a rival of the western religion. After he experienced a great awakening through ascetic exercises and seeking the truth for over sixteen years, he claimed to have had an experience of meeting *Hanulnim* (하느님, the Lord of Heaven) in April, 1860. He shared his realisations and experience in ‘*Dongtyeongdaejeon* (東經大全, The Great Completion of Eastern Scripture)’, ‘*Yongdamyusa* (龍潭遺詞, The Words of Dragon’s Pond)’ etc. and they became Chings of Donghak later. He constructed Donghak as a religion to serve the *Hanulnim*, the one who was traditionally recognised as the ultimate being (Heaven). *Hanulnim* of Donghak was different from the Christian God, *Hanulnim* was not the creator, but only a superintendent over creation which was a result of the activity of Yin and Yang. Christianity claims that God exists separately from his creation, whereas *Hanulnim* is contained in everything, created everything from nothing. Donghak emphasises ‘*Innaecheon* (人乃天, Human being is thus God)’. In other words, *Hanulnim* exists in the human mind, and all human beings (or all things) serve *Hanulnim*, the Lord in themselves (*Sicheonju*, 侍天主, to serve the Lord of Heaven)’. Christianity speaks of a transcendental God or kingdom of God that may imply a world beyond reality. However, Donghak emphasises that the kingdom of Heaven is in this world, and one must seek salvation in this world. Choi thought that *Hanulnim* did not exist in a transcendental world but in the human mind, and taught that ‘*Seong* (誠, wholeheartedness)’, ‘*Kyeong* (敬, respect)’, and ‘*Sin* (信, faith) are the most important virtues of humanity, and are present in the human mind as the evidence of *Hanulnim*. This confidence as the most significant element among those virtues led to maintain the original mind of humanity and to make all behaviours right (守心正氣) in daily life, and the ethical practice was

naturally emphasised by cultivating mind and body in this base.⁷³

The ultimate ideal of Donghak was the thought of '*Hucheongaebyeok* (後天開闢, the Beginning of the Post-Heaven)'. The era of the Ante-Heaven, which was dominated by oppression, confrontation, exploitation, inequality, and injustice, is coming to an end, and the new era of a righteous, right, equal, reconciliatory and harmonic Post-Heaven, is near. Discrimination (rich and poor; high and low status by birth and/or class, social status, or gender discriminations) would disappear by *Hucheongaebyeok*, and a righteous world would come. Consequently, the lower classes that wanted to change the social system and to be part of the new world energetically supported the idea of *Hucheongaebyeok*. It was a revolutionary thought from the perspective of the aristocracy, and the government could not tolerate it, and began to oppress it claiming that it was heresy. The thought of Donghak involved not only the *Minjung*'s view of the aristocratic government but also the nationalistic resistance against the imperialistic invasion politically and ideologically.

Although Donghak originated in the soil of Korea it was closely related to the existing religions. Donghak included the elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and indigenous belief. It states:

The realised Way is not originally Confucianism, Buddhism, or *Seon* (仙, Indigenous Belief of Immortal Men). The realised Way is the union of Confucianism, Buddhism, and *Seon*. Although the Way of Heaven is not Confucianism, Buddhism, or *Seon*, but these are parts of the Way of Heaven. The ethics of Confucianism, the awakening of Buddhism, and the cultivation of *Ki* of *Seon* are the natural elements of human nature, and the original parts of the Way of Heaven. The realised Way is to reach the ultimate great sources (무극대원).⁷⁴

Donghak's religious practices include not only ethics, awakening, cultivation in different religions as the way of Heaven but also contain indigenous popular beliefs

⁷³ Hanguk Cheolhak Sasang Yeonguhwoi, *Hanguk Cheolhak Sasangsa*, (Study of the History of Korean Philosophy), 389.

⁷⁴ Kyeokhwa Lee, *Cheondokyo Changeonsa* (천도교 창건사, History of the Foundation of Cheodokyo), (Seoul: Kyeongin Munhwasa, 1970), 47.

such as incantations or amulets. It means that Donghak recognised the multi-religious context, and tried to achieve their harmony and ideal coexistence. Donghak was based on the view that the ultimate purpose of all religions is the same: they exist for the people and for the nation, though their religious practices and expressions are different and imperfect. Jaewu Choi examined Christianity, and concluded that the western one is only for one's own sake, and he rejected it.⁷⁵

Although Donghak revealed its hostility against Japanese imperialism in an independent spirit, the original doctrine of Donghak was not exclusive. The thought of *Samkyeong* (三敬, Three Respects): the respect for Heaven, humanity, and nature, clearly points out the necessity of mutual reconciliation between Heaven and humanity, human being and human being, and humanity and nature. To build an ideal state, to practice these virtues in all situations, and to embody equality of all things were the dreams of Donghak. It is clear that this thought of Donghak became a seed of nationalism, egalitarianism, humanism, and republicanism later.

At the end of the 19th century, the social reformation movement against the corruption of the local aristocracy and the resistance against the political expansion of foreign countries were inevitable. Consequently, Donghak became the crucial foundation of the uprising of the peasants in January, 1894, called Donghak Revolution. The peasant class, which suffered deeply from social inequality and the intelligentsia, who were weary of the political inequality imposed by external powers, participated in this revolution which was suppressed by the allied forces of the aristocratic government and Japan in January, 1895 claiming up to 400,000 victims. Nonetheless, the ideas of Donghak remained in the mindset of the common people, and became the crucial basis for the *Minjung* (people) movement against the military government and for the

⁷⁵ See Jaewu Choi, "Nonhakmun (논학문, Discussions)", *Dongkyeongdaejeon* (동경대전, The Great Completion of Eastern Ching) in Hangeul Donkyeongdaejeon (한글 동경대전, The Great Completion of Eastern Ching in Korean) by the Research Centre of Donghak, (Seoul: Janong, 1991).

democratisation of Korean society in 1970-80.⁷⁶ The slogans of the democratisation movement such as ‘*Minjok* (민족, Nation)’, ‘*Minjung* (민중, People)’, and ‘*Minju* (민주, Democracy)’ which was anti-dictatorship and anti-foreign power clearly showed the influence of Donghak in the modern history of Korea.

3.1.2. Ecological Elements of Donghak

The ultimate goal of the worldview of Donghak was to build a heaven on earth. The concept of *Innaecheon* (인내천, people are heaven), which is the core thought of Donghak, drew attention to the dignity of humanity in the hierarchical society of the time. The insistence, which all people are equal through the understanding of *Innaecheon*, affected to the understanding of all things. That is, their egalitarianism did not only stay on the understanding of humanity but also extended to the recognition of the natural world. The cosmology by the theory of *Jiki* (至氣) and the sociology by the theory of *Dongkwilche* (同歸一體, all things drive from one body and return to one body) also became the foundation of the argument. In this respect, the natural world was regarded as a friend of humanity. It was reported that the assembly of Donghak’s revolutionists was peaceful and environmentally friendly in the early stage of Donghak as there was no violence and rubbish in the community of over 25,000 people.⁷⁷ Although the followers of Donghak, who were mostly peasants and low-class people, picked up spears in order to protect their life from oppression and ignorance by the corrupted aristocracy and government, their fundamental spirit was to indiscriminately respect people and things. The second founder of Donghak, Sihyeong Choi, said that ‘Heaven and earth, and father and mother are the same (天地父母一體)’.⁷⁸ That is, father and mother are not the only parents but heaven and earth are, too, because

⁷⁶ Sunchul Shin, Jinyoung Lee, “The Meaning of Donghak Peasant Revolution and the Thought of Donghak”, *Donghak ui Yeoksa wa Nongmin Undong* (동학의 역사와 농민운동, The History of Donghak and Peasant Revolution), (Seoul: Seokyeong Munhwasa, 1995); See the web page: http://dev.cein.or.kr/Tonghak/su2/su2_1-2.htm. From an online article of Cyber School entitled: *About Donghak*, dated December 12, 2000.

⁷⁷ Ungil Im, “Donghak eseo Natanan Jayeonkan kwa Segyekwan (동학에서 나타난 자연관과 세계관, A View of Nature and Cosmology in Donghak)”, *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunje* (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Thought and Environmental Problem), 193-4.

⁷⁸ See *Ibid.*, 186-7.

everything including human beings exist because heaven and earth. As a result, the natural world was not an object of conquest according to a mechanical worldview; rather, it was to be respected.

There were three practical ethical considerations in building heaven on earth: to respect heaven, to respect people, and to respect things. Heaven here refers to God or *Hanulnim* (하늘님, the Lord of Heaven) who exists in everything, in the natural world as well as in human beings. Therefore, Donghak insisted that there is nothing to be discriminated by a hierarchical order in the cosmos. The followers regarded a small grain of rice on a table as *Hanulnim* and family, as parents, sister or brother as well, because it was conceived that *Hanulnim*, humanity and all other existences are fundamentally one. In this respect, Donghak was an environmental friendly religion.

3.2. Christianity

3.2.1. Its History and Influence

It has already been noted in the previous section that the *Choseon* dynasty was in serious decline by the late nineteenth century. The symptoms of the collapsing *Choseon* dynasty were political division of the corrupted ruling powers to gain hegemony over the incompetent dynasty, the common people's suffering from economic exploitation by the local bureaucracy, and the frequent interventions of the imperialistic Japan, China, and other foreign countries. Moreover, the traditional value system of Confucianism on which *Choseon* was grounded was incapable of responding to the internal and external pressures of the state, and the religious functions as mental props and comforts of people were gradually losing their meaning. After defeating China (1894-1895) and Russia (1904-1905), Japan gained a firm footing in Manchuria and established itself as the leading military power in East Asia. In this storm, Korean society was itself split into two groups: one insisting on the traditional structure of society and the Confucian value system, and the other, wanting to adopt Western culture and systems. Thus, the Korean people were in ceaseless confusion and too weak to defend their country by themselves ideologically and militarily. Korea finally submitted to full Japanese

occupation in August 1910.⁷⁹

In terms of religion, Confucianism, the dominant authority and the foundation of politics, society, culture, and religion throughout the five hundred years of *Choseon*, was losing its power. In addition, the class structure, which supported the Confucian order of society and politics, was collapsing. These circumstances consequently produced new religious movements such as Roman Catholicism, Donghak, and Protestantism. In particular, the concepts of non-discriminative equality of all people and the kingdom of Heaven in the understanding of Christianity, provided hope and comfort to people who suffered from the actual politics and the failings of the social structure. Christianity was eventually the good news for *Minjung* who eagerly waited for a new era, and it spread underground amid threats of persecution.

Although a trace of Christianity was discovered in the seventeenth century, it was simply a subject of scholarship not a religion and was called ‘the Western School (서학)’. Therefore, the official arrival of Roman Catholicism has generally been marked by the return of Seunghun Lee (이승훈) from Beijing in 1784, who was baptised there. He baptised Byeok Lee (이벽) and Ilsin Kweon (권일신) after he returned from Beijing, and these three people became the founders of Korean Roman Catholicism. The formation of Roman Catholicism posed a challenge to Confucian tradition. Firstly, Christianity claimed that the worship of ancestors was idolatry. In the eye of the ruling class this claim meant the denial of traditional ethics and order of society. Jichung Yun (윤지충) and Sangyeon Kweon (권상연) were executed in 1791. The second tribulation was caused by a political reason of the government in order to remove counter-party politicians in 1801, the number of martyrs at that time was about three hundred. The government which, based on the strict Confucian political establishment, used persecution to rid itself of the relatively weak party that accommodated the foreign influences, and it resulted in a great number of victims. During the regency of

⁷⁹ Yeoksahak Yeonguso, *Kangjwa Hanguk Keunhyeondaesa* (강좌 한국 근현대사, Lectures on Modern Korean History), (Seoul: Pulpit, 1999), 79.

Pungyang Cho (풍양 조씨) in 1839, Christianity was labelled as a heresy that destroys traditional virtues. The famous writing, '*Sangjae Sangseo* (상재상서, The Writing to Submit to the King) of Hasang Jeong (정하상) who was later executed, defended Christianity claiming that is not a heresy but is the true religion on which all valuable virtues may be built. As a result of the persecution, around 130 people including two French Fathers were executed. Nevertheless, Roman Catholic churches were continuously growing, and the number of believers was more than 23,000 including twelve missionaries in 1850s.⁸⁰ The government regarded Roman Catholicism as an aide of the invading western power, and found itself in a crisis. Under the union of Confucian despotism and isolationism, a great massacre occurred between 1866-69, about 8,000 believers were killed together with nine French missionaries. The first one hundred years of Christianity recorded a miserable history of martyrdom.⁸¹

The main points of collision between Confucianism and Christianity were the understanding of God, the understanding of ethics, and the question of human rights and social order. The Christian God was a transcendent and personal being, and a creator who created and governs the world. Conversely, Confucians understood Heaven as an absolute principle as an immanent being in the world, not transcendent or personal and allowed no flexibility regarding the governing system, the hierarchical society, or the hierarchical relationship of human beings which was based on the principles of Confucianism. This viewpoint was not tolerant about the understanding of which God is only absolute and reality is relative, and any change of the reality or the social system by the Christian perspective could not be accommodated at that time. Secondly, Confucianism understood that Christianity ignored filial piety because it refuses ancestral worship, the most fundamental ethical principle. Confucians also saw that Christians did not have to be loyal to their rulers and state. Christianity understands filial piety and loyalty through a theo-centric viewpoint: neither of them can be a priority over obeying God. Finally, the social structure of Confucianism was

⁸⁰ Dongsik Ryu, "Gidogkyo Sasangsa (기독교 사상사, History of Christian Thought)", *Hangukjongkyo Sasangsa II* (History of Religious Thought in Korea), 201-5.

⁸¹ Ibid., 205.

hierarchical. The teaching of Christianity that all human beings are equal and the social structure should be horizontal was entirely alien to them. Therefore, collision between Confucianism and Christianity was inevitable, and led to the oppression of Christianity.

A second wave of Christian missionaries arrived in 1885. Henry G. Appenzeller, who was a Baptist missionary, and Horace G. Underwood, who was a Presbyterian missionary, introduced Protestantism in Korea. It grew rapidly through the works of mission, education, and medical service, and many western missionaries began to come to Korea. According to the statistics, the number of believers was 590 in 1895, 19,515 in 1900, 52,315 in 1905, and 226,791 in 1910.⁸² The main causes of the rapid growth were the socio-political circumstances of the time and the cultural activities of Christianity.⁸³

In the storm of political, social and religious change during the late 17th century and the early 18th century, people who felt the uncertain about their future within the framework of traditional thoughts and religions, were thirsty for a new era, and Christianity was a reliable alternative. Christianity quickly expanded within the strata of intellectuals, the youth, women, and the low classes. Additionally, the cultural activities of Christianity such as education, medical service and youth and women movements provided a chance for people to recover a national and cultural confidence during the Japanese colonialism. A dormant self or national consciousness particularly of women and the low classes was expressed through various activities of Christian mission, and became an initial explosive for the Independence Demonstration on March the 1st 1919 (3.1 독립운동) against the colonial government. Early Protestantism mostly offered a positive impression to people, even though the early missionaries ignored political issues as they believed in the separation between church and state. They banned drinking and smoking because it was against the Puritan faith of American missionaries. Consequently, it was obvious that Christianity offered a refuge for people who suffered from social discrimination; it contributed to a flourishing egalitarian movement, and to a national

⁸² Ibid., 214.

⁸³ Ibid., 214-6.

independence movement against Japanese colonialism.

Typical Korean Christian conservatism or fundamentalism stemmed from the puritan tradition of the early American Presbyterian missionaries in Korea: dancing, drinking, and smoking were condemned as sins, and criticism of the Bible as well as liberal theology were considered heresies.⁸⁴ In accordance with mission policy to separate political and ecclesiastical issues (1901), the main interest of Korean Christianity was the salvation of the individual. Moreover, the absoluteness of God and the authority of the Bible were strongly emphasised, and these consequently formed ideological basis for the Korean Christian conservatism. These were also the main ideas behind the spiritual revival starting in *Pyeongyang* in 1907, and it was the great motive for the growth of Korean churches. This movement of spiritual revival focused mainly on the spiritual salvation of individuals through emphasising the direct communication with God, and the miracles performed by the power of His Holy Spirit. There was a pastor, Seonju Gil (길선주, 1869-1935) in the centre of this movement. It is fair to say, that the traditions of Korean Christians, which are the dawn prayer meetings, the Bible reading movement, and the taking of own Bible and hymnbook to church were initiated by him.⁸⁵ It seems that these practices were influenced by the Buddhist practice of meditation at dawn and by the Confucian method of continuously reading scriptures. Moreover, the memorial services for the sake of ancestors, which were held on every anniversary date of an ancestors' death, obviously was a Confucian custom adapted to Christianity as an attempt to avoid criticism of idolatry and to preserve the traditional Confucian ethical virtue at the same time. In this viewpoint, we can conclude that Christianity was indigenised in the Korean context.

Since the revival movement, although most of the Korean Christians became conservative, there have been two different styles of Christianity in the Korean context: the progressive social participation by Chiho Yun (윤치호, 1864-1945) and the religious

⁸⁴ A.J. Brown, *The Mastery of the Far East*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 540.

⁸⁵ See Dongsik Ryu, *Kidogkyo Sasangsa* (History of Christian Thought), 217-20.

dialogue by Byeongheon Choi (최병헌, 1858-1927).⁸⁶ Chiho Yun, who was the first believer of the Southern Methodist Church and the first Korean theology student in America, was convinced that the practice of Christianity should be extended to politics, education, and social activities. After returning from America, he worked in the civil service, and later became the president of ‘*Doklip Shinmun* (독립신문, the Independent Newspaper)’ which led the resistance against Japanese colonialism. Amid persecution, he continued to promote social participation and also tried to unite the Southern and the Northern Methodist churches in an ecumenical spirit. He was also the first Korean person who took part in the first World Missionary Conference, from which subsequently developed the International Missionary Council (IMC), in Edinburgh in 1910, and his words inspired by Christian cosmology became the words of the Korean national anthem. His love of the state and Christ influenced ‘*Minjung* theology’ later. Byeongheon Choi converted from Confucianism to Christianity. He as a scholar and a minister of the Methodist church tried to understand Christianity and other religions in their relationship to each other. His interest, as he was a Christian, was to find his Christian identity in the context of religious pluralism. He concluded that the relationship between Christianity and other religions should be understood through the distinction of biblical absoluteness and relative absoluteness, and through dialectical affirmation and denial. In other words, he argued that the historicity or the culture of Christianity as a relative religion cannot be absolute over other religions unlike the absoluteness of the Bible. Christianity as a religion exists in continuity with other religions, but there is no continuity between the truth of the gospel and other religions. He also insisted that the thought of Heaven in Confucianism is in continuity with the Christian divine concept, though it is incomplete. He understood all religions as cultural phenomena in the world created by God, and the gospel of Christ is the final religion. His inclusive attitude toward religious pluralism by the distinction of religion and truth contradicted the conservative ideas of Korean Christianity. His interest and study of other religions became a tradition of the Methodist theology, and it has still been

⁸⁶ See Ibid., 221-31.

developing as a distinct genre of Korean theology.

After the tribulations caused by Japanese colonialism, Korea was finally liberated at the end of the Second World War in 1945. However, Korea soon once more faced the unfortunate reality of a power of which the nation had no control over: it was divided into South and North by the USA and USSR. This division was not only territorial but ideological, and it became the cause of the Korean War (1950-1953) which was a national tragedy. Having overcome the oppression of the colonial government, most Christians in North Korea had to flee to the South to avoid the liquidation policy of the communist government. It has been reported that the remaining Christians in North Korea kept on practicing their faith in the underground church.

The 60s and 70s of South Korea were marked by military dictatorship and the rapid growth of the economy. The dictatorship fuelled continuous demonstrations staged by university students, and industrialisation and urbanisation which were the by-products of the expansion of the economy changed the social system and values and led to the collapsing of rural society and the extended family system, the weakening of traditional virtues, etc. Amid these internal, economic, social, and cultural changes, religious population rapidly increased, and Buddhism and Christianity became major religions in Korea. According to the statistics, in 1969, there were 5 million Buddhists and 3 million Christians, 3 to 4 times more than in 1964.⁸⁷ This growth did not stop in the 70s, so much that the number of Christians reached 7 million and the number of Buddhists 10 million. In this period, there were three burning issues concerning Korean Christianity: ecumenicalism, secularisation, and indigenisation. According to the attitude toward these issues, Korean Christianity can be classified as conservative, progressive, and liberal. Conservatism rejected critical readings of the Bible and ecumenical movements because of their belief in the absoluteness of the Bible and doctrine, and two major Presbyterian denominations in Korea apparently divided because of it. The second group, the progressive positively participated in secular issues: political, social, and

⁸⁷ Ibid., 268-9.

economic interests, and took part in the ecumenical movement, and produced ‘Minjung Theology’ whose founder was Namdong Seo (서남동), etc. The liberals were concerned with indigenous theology focusing on the Korean traditions.⁸⁸ Although there were divisions and confrontations among these groups, it is no doubt that these different theological streams contributed to the development of Korean Christianity.

3.2.2. Ecological Elements

Christianity experienced many difficulties during its short history such as serious persecutions, colonial rule, Korean War, and Industrialisation. The early Korean Christianity was concerned with the establishment of Christianity amid the resistance of the ruling classes of the host nation, between the 1860s and 80s the number of churches grew quickly. Unfortunately, ecological issues were not seriously raised within the Church until the 1960s. Nevertheless, there were some Christian leaders who showed elements of concern for ecological issues, for example Hyeonphil Lee (이현필) or Seokheon Ham (함석헌).

Hyeonphil Lee (1913-1964), who was called ‘Francis of Korea’, was wandering around Korea, preached the gospel and had no personal belongings. Many people followed him. He lived mainly with lepers and the poor, and established a community. He did not eat meat, and did not use pharmaceutical medicine to cure disease. He lived a poor but honest life, and had only one meal per one day during his whole life. He used to pray in the mountains until early dawn. He laboured in fields as a principle of life, and took care of orphans and lepers. His life has been widely described as natural, economic and diligent. There are many followers of him at present and many local orphanages have been managed by his followers.⁸⁹

Seokheon Ham (1901-1989), who was a Christian thinker and famous for his non-

⁸⁸ See Ibid., 273-83.

⁸⁹ See the website: <http://www.gamly.com/show.asp?kind=36&index=2025>. From an online article of Christian Times entitled, *Gongdongche wa Yeongseong 1-Donkwangweon* (공동체와 영성 1-동광원, Community and Spirituality 1- Dongkwangweon), dated September 11, 2004.

denominational and non-violent resistance movement against the dictatorship, promoted the thought of *Ssial* (씨알, a seed) which influenced Minjung theology. *Ssial* here literally means *Ssi* (씨, a seed as an external form) and *al* (알, life or power as internal power). In other words, *Ssial* indicates a human being or life in its pure state of original nature without any artificial discrimination imposed on it. All existences including human beings originate from the *Ssial* and also possess it. *Ssial* enables all things to live by its own, original nature. Therefore, the thought of *Ssial* points out that to be a true human being means to be liberated from any external oppression or discrimination. Ham understood *Ssial* as Minjung, who have right to live according to their original nature, in the Korean context. Minjung, in this understanding, should be the owner of the church, the society, or the country, and cannot be an instrument of them in any case. Although Ham mainly focused on the liberation of human beings, his *Ssial* thought suggested a holistic understanding of life. Life as *Ssial*, which was given by God, is not only in human beings but also in all things. He maintained that the recognition of the dignity of life existing in all things is the core of the Christian faith. Furthermore, he only had one meal a day throughout his life and lived a poor but honest life. The ecological element in Han's thought is his holistic understanding of life and the life-style of diligence and economy. The influence of Seokheon Ham on Korean Christianity is very important, it has become a focus of study in academic circles.

3.3. Summary

Various religions have been examined in the context of Korean tradition which played an important role in the historical evolution of Korean religious pluralism. Each religion had political or social privileges in a given period in which it was associated either with the state or social needs. The foregoing analysis has shown, however, that none of these religions were able to maintain their political or social superiority in perpetuity. In the process of the settlement, each continued to be influential among Korean people in the popular manifestations of religious practice. In this respect, each religion as part of the Korean tradition contributed to the infrastructure of the accumulated Korean religious pluralism.

At the beginning of each year many Koreans take part in *Tojongbigyeol* (土種秘訣), which involves practicing the coming events of the year on the basis of a person's trigrams. A substantial number of people go to the shaman to ask about auspicious days of engagements, weddings, and moving houses, and many fishermen do not leave ports without *Gut* (굿, exorcism) and farmers place a pole and statues at the entrance of towns signifying prayers for a good harvest. Many still have a shamanistic celebration on the opening day of their business. Koreans depend heavily on the practice of invoking divine blessings on routine aspects of life. These would be the typical aspects of Shamanism's influence. Confucianism in the modern life of Koreans is generally present in the ethics of the family-centred and patriarchal ethos of Korean culture, in which *Samgang Oryun* (三綱五倫, the Three Cardinal Virtues and Five Ethics) and the rituals of *Kwanhonsangje* (冠婚喪祭, Age, Marriage, Funerals, and Ancestor Veneration) are observed.⁹⁰ Additionally, most Korean families have genealogical records, the so-called *Jokbo* (族譜), which also back up Confucian ethics. Korean society is dependent upon Confucianism in terms of ethics and family system.⁹¹

The influences of Shamanism and Confucianism have been substantially present in the daily lives of modern Koreans, but according to the statistics, Christianity and Buddhism have a much greater number of believers than Shamanism and Confucianism. The statistics on religions of Korea issued by the government in 1999 shows that Buddhism is practiced among 26.3 % of the whole population and Christianity including Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is practiced by 25.6 %, and the number of believers of other religions is less than 2%.⁹² However, this data was based on a questionnaire which allowed only one choice.⁹³ Moreover, the criteria of identification apply only to Christianity, because neither Confucianism, Shamanism, nor Buddhism

⁹⁰ For detail see the previous sections in this chapter.

⁹¹ See Dongsik Ryu, *Hanguk Jongkyo wa Kidoggyo* (한국종교와 기독교, Korean Religions and Christianity), (Seoul: Kidoggyo Seohoi, 1965), 187-9.

⁹² See the web page of the statistics section of the government, http://www.nso.go.kr/cgi-bin/sws_777pop.cgi?A_CONTENTS=0227&A_REPORT_ID=MA, dated December 12, 2003.

⁹³ See Byeongik Ko, *Dong Asia ui Jeontong kwa Byeonyong* (동아시아의 전통과 변용, tradition and Transformation of East Asia), (Seoul: Munhak kwa Silcheon, 1996), 280-9.

have any institutional ways of identifying their adherents such as baptism or confirmation, and none of them make a distinction between believers and non-believers, since their teachings are concerned with humanity and human society as a whole.⁹⁴ Therefore, many Koreans who may not identify themselves as Confucians in the sense of religious affiliation may nonetheless observe the Confucian rites and adopt Confucian customs and values in their family life and common ethics. Therefore, the 2% of 'other believers' can be contested. Although Buddhism and Christianity have a high percentage of believers, the presence of Confucianism or Shamanism could never be ignored in terms of their religious practice.⁹⁵ Therefore, it is likely that individual Koreans can maintain two or more religious leanings simultaneously.

While each of these religious traditions has a distinct history and preference in their own right, they have also evolved into a complex co-existence that enables people to exercise a degree of religious pragmatism in selecting and amalgamating elements of each. In the long history of religious change, each religion has influenced and has been influenced, and each religion naturally adopted other religious elements because they recognised the intrinsic value of each of them. In the light of that, it is not difficult to comprehend that Korean thought has a tendency to harmonise religious differences. As it has been already examined in the previous sections, reconciliation, harmonisation, and union with other thoughts have manifested in the principles of *Hwajaeng* of Wonhyo and *Samkyohwoitongron* of Chiweon Choi. This tendency might be the key to the settlement and survival of each religion in the pluralistic context though there were collisions mainly due to political reasons. Consequently, it is apparent that the identity, vitality, or influence of these religions was strengthened by their interaction with one another. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the durability and verity of Korean religious pluralism, and Koreans have a capability to harmonise and unite various thoughts

⁹⁴ Iheum Yun, *Hanguk Jongkyo Yeongu II* (한국종교연구, The Study of Korean Religion), (Seoul: Jibmundang, 1991), 221.

⁹⁵ See Iheum Yun, *Hanguk Jongkyo Yeongu II* (한국종교연구, The Study of Korean Religion), 93-4. He shows the examination that the rate of Confucian disposition in Buddhists and Christians is higher than 76%.

through their long experience and to produce unique thoughts in their context. Above all, the accumulated and layered religious tradition is evident in the lives of Korean people. Certainly, the multi-religious experience of Korean people cannot be interpreted as mere syncretism or a dual religious system, because it produces a unique thought system by mutual interactions in the pluralistic context.

Each religion in Korean history has its own ecological elements, but they were not articulated at the time because they did not face an ecological crisis. Nevertheless, their ecological elements may be indispensable backgrounds for the contemporary ecological theology in the Korean context as each religion continues to play its role in the culture and mentality of Korea. Therefore, it is significant to understand that the Korean ecological theology, which will be dealt with in this thesis through three thinkers' thought that came from different religious backgrounds, was also influenced by this religious accumulated tradition and ecological elements.

4. Ecological Movement

In this section, we will turn our attention to the contemporary ecological context of Korea in its short history. As a consequence of rapid economic growth, nature was suffering, moreover, capitalism and material civilisation by industrialisation quickly changed and destroyed traditional family-centred values and agricultural lifestyles. As a result of the development policy of the government, mountains and lands were carelessly destroyed in order to construct apartments, roads, bridges, factories, etc. In these circumstances, the environmental movement has progressed with both its possibility and uncertainty over the last thirty years. Therefore, this section will look at the short history of the environmental movement through secular, religious, and academic circles. To understand Korean ecological theology it is also significant to know the ecological context as well as the religious context. Therefore, this chapter will look at the history and influence of ecological movement in Korea though it has a short history.

The 20th century is characterised by systems of mass production and the advancement of science and technology. It was called 'the growth century' (the report of World Watch, 1999). However, at the same time, unsurprisingly growth was accompanied by much ecological destruction, such as the hole in the ozone layer, natural disasters caused by the greenhouse effect, the doubling of the population of the planet in 36 years, rapid increase of carbon dioxide emissions due to industrialisation and the destruction of nature, extinction of species, and etc.⁹⁶ Ecological crisis became a global problem at last in the 21st century.

Korea is no exception in this case. During the Korean War (1950-1953), most of the Korean peninsula was devastated by indiscriminate bombing, and those who survived the war suffered poverty and famine in the 1950s. In 1960s-70s, industry and the economy were the prime interests of the military government, industrialisation was rapidly implemented in the whole area of South Korea, and mountains, rivers, hills, and land were recklessly destroyed by various construction projects of heavy chemical industry complexes, new roads and bridges, industrial towns, etc. In this process, the traditional agrarian society of Korea inevitably started to disintegrate, and various traditional values also began to crumble due to urbanisation. Industry and economy always received top priority in the national policies. As a result, water and air were intolerably polluted by industrial and domestic waste and the smoke of vehicles and factories, and environmental concern consequently increased in 1980s-90s. Although there were some voices from environmental organizations protesting against this unconditional industrialisation, their campaigns could not prevent the inevitable.

The population of Korea increased from 25 million to 45 million during the last thirty years, and the population of urban areas from 30% to 75%. The consumption rate of coal rose six fold and the consumption of oil and electricity rapidly increased by fifty

⁹⁶ See William Ophuls, *Ecology and The Politics of Scarcity*, (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1977); Cheryl S. Silver & S. Ruth Defries, *One Earth, One Future, Our Changing Global Environment*, (Washington: National Academic Press, 1990).

five times in the last thirty years.⁹⁷ Korea did not become a country which can be quietly watched with one's arm folded. The ecological crisis in Korea by the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation did not only lead to the destruction of nature but was accompanied by change and collapse of traditional values and life styles of people. In this circumstance, an ecological movement began to grow from 1960s, and increasingly proceeded with a growing sense of ecological crisis since 1990s.

The history of the ecological movement is short in Korea. In 1960s, economic growth and industrialisation were the main causes of environmental pollution. In 1962, the president of Korea, Jeonghi Park said in the opening ceremony of the *Ulsan* industrial complex, which was one the first industrial complexes of its time, that we would prosper when the blue sky of *Ulsan* is covered by black smoke,⁹⁸ hinting at the future of Korea. Under the campaign slogan of economic growth was portrayed as the only way of survival, skies and lands of Korea began to be polluted. By a variety of research and data, many ecological scholars have pointed out various factors as the causes of ecological crisis such as industrialisation, material civilisation, mass production and mass consumption, and globalisation in terms of economy; mechanism, anthropocentrism, dualism, individualism, and reductionism in terms of religion or philosophy; patriarch, hierarchism, and centralisation in terms of social or political structure.⁹⁹ Consequently, these arguments proved that the ecological crisis is not a simple matter stemming from a single cause, but rather a combined and complicated problem related to many areas.¹⁰⁰

To overcome the ecological crisis demands a total effort involving religion, philosophy, science, sociology, politics, and economics. Consequently, Korean environmental

⁹⁷ See the web page <http://www.ysh1125.co.kr/essay1-1.htm>, From an online article entitled, *Hwankyeong undong* (환경운동, Environmental Movement), dated December 12, 2003.

⁹⁸ See the web: http://kyongiu.kfem.or.kr/kjbbs/read.cgi?board=data&y_number=9, From an online article entitled, *Hwankyeong Undong kwa Saengmyeong Undong* (환경운동과 생명운동, Environmental Movement and Life Movement), dated December 12, 2003.

⁹⁹ See Younghun Cho, *Kidogkyo Hwankyeongyunli ui Silcheonkwajae* (기독교 환경윤리의 실천과제, The Practical Task of Christian Environmental Ethics), (Seoul: Daehan Kidogkyo Seohwoi, 1997).

¹⁰⁰ See William R. Catton, *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*, (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1980).

movement developed into an ecological movement. In the initial stage, the environmental movement, which prevailed mostly in the period of 60s and 70s, focused on the protection of nature from pollution and destruction; the ecological movement in the 80s widened the scope and included quality of life and other social issues coinciding with the democratisation of Korean politics. Finally, the life movement from the 90s was more systematically concerned with human rights, religious dialogue, and unification of South and North. However, it is fair to say that these movements mainly stayed on the level of pointing out problems and accepting the reality rather than suggesting an alternative and direction for the future. Therefore, before analysing and assessing the contemporary ecological philosophy, this section will briefly examine the contemporary ecological context in its short history.

Here it is not the purpose of this chapter to evaluate the ecological movement. Rather this chapter will try to understand the contemporary situation of the ecological movement through classification such as secular, religious, and academic circles before we move on to the examination of Korean ecological theology.

4.1. Secular Circles

As mentioned before, the history of the ecological movement can be divided into three periods: 1960s-70s, 1980s, and 1987~. The ecological movement was triggered by the environmental pollution in the 1960s. On the basis of the strong power of the military government, plans for economic development were implemented fervently. The government concentrated on the development of the heavy chemical industry which was an eclipsed industry in the West. The west had already experienced the damage caused by pollution and side effects of growth, but it was considered as a sign of prosperity in Korea. This policy reflected the intention of the government to secure victory over North Korea in terms of military and economic power. This sudden change of industrial structure caused two problems: pollution and urbanisation. Most common people did not recognise the serious consequences of pollution during 1960s and 70s. Compensation movements, which demanded compensation from the factories for direct

damages caused by pollution, locally and sporadically began to rise. Moreover, under the strong Revitalising Reforms system, it was almost impossible to publish accurate research data by experts about environmental pollution to the public. There were compensation movements initiated by local people in *Ulsan, Onsan, Yecheon, Kwangyang*, etc., and did not attract much attention and were merely treated as small events.¹⁰¹ There was no an environmental organisation. Without any outside support, these movements were temporary or unsystematic. Although the government legislated ‘the law of preventing pollution’ in 1963, ‘the law of protecting the environment’ in 1977, and ‘the constitution of protection of nature’ in 1978, they did not affect the extent of industrialisation and only emphasised a duty to keep local integrity for the extension of *Saemaeul Undong* (새마을 운동, New Town Movement) in the level of the government.¹⁰² Urbanisation was an even more serious problem than pollution. Following government policy, many industrial complexes were built in many areas, and the movement of population and the change of residential districts rapidly proceeded around these industrial complex areas, and natural environment around these areas was carelessly destroyed by building roads, apartments, factories, etc. Urbanisation created trouble between urban and rural communities or districts due to economic unbalance, resulting in the phenomena of rural exodus which in turn led to change in traditional family values. Although many rural areas were suffering from the urbanisation, there was little resistance, probably because people’s main concerns were material prosperity by industrialisation and physical convenience by the modernisation. After all, the ecological movement in 1960s-70s stayed on the economic compensation movement, which was initially local and temporary.

The second period of the ecological movement in 1980 to 1987 was the phase of anti-pollution movement. Professional environmental organisations began to form by some

¹⁰¹ See the web page, <http://www.ysh1125.co.kr/essay1-1.htm>, From an online article entitled, *Hwankyeong Undongsa* (환경 운동사, History of Environmental Movement), dated December 12, 2003.

¹⁰² *Saemaul Undong* (새마을 운동) as the national developing movement by the government was proceeded in 1960s-70s. It was mainly to cleanse houses and towns and to build a new house, road, bridge, water and sewage, electricity, etc. in all local villages. As a result, most residential environments were significantly improved, but natural destruction was inevitably accompanied by the careless development.

intellectuals and religious men, and they began to join local resistant groups. This movement gradually expanded and became a social movement which was able to maintain high interests and the participation of people. Finally, 'the Research Institute of Pollution Problem of Korea (공해문제연구소)' was established in 1982 including a research group. It was the first public environmental organisation, and has been generally recognised as the official starting point of the environmental movement in Korea. This organisation, initially formed by many Catholic and Protestant Christians, provided the impetus for an ecological movement led by civilians, who experienced the sufferings. By continuously presenting the problems of pollution and ecologically educating people, the anti-pollution movement was spread nationwide, and its social recognition increased. In 1984, some groups of student joined and founded the 'Anti-Pollution Movement Conference', which developed into the 'Anti-Pollution Civil Conference' in 1986 and the 'Banishment of Pollution Movement Youth Conference' in 1987. As a result of uniting various environmental organisations, in 1988 'Anti-Pollution Movement Federation (공해추방운동연합)' was formed. However, the ecological movement in this period was mainly led by part of the democratisation movement rather than by itself, there was a limitation for it to become a national movement.¹⁰³ The anti-pollution movement was influenced by the National Democratisation movement rather than by ecological movement, and the main participants were democratisation activists. In this situation where the democratisation movement was the main interest, although the movement of anti-pollution was supported nationally, the ecological movement itself was not placed in the centre of Korean society and peoples' minds. One of the main characteristics in this period was to distinguish between ecological assailants and victims, and these victims began to join the environmental groups. After all, the ecological movement during this period mainly stayed within anti-pollution movement.

¹⁰³ See the web page, http://www.greenkorea.org/old_data/themenews/themedata/2000032, From an online article entitled, Hankug Sahwoi ui Hwankyeongundong Yeoksa wa Jaengjeom (한국사회의 환경운동 역사와 쟁점, History and Issue of Environmental Movement of Korean Society), dated December 12, 2003.

The great national resistance for democratisation in 1987, called *Yuwol Hangjaeng* (6월 항쟁, June Resistance), was an attempt by Korea towards a new democratic political system. Social desires of people rapidly increased and social participation was high. On this fertile soil, professional organisations of the ecological movement and the study centres of the environment were springing up and operated vigorously. There are two major environmental organisations in the non-religious context: the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (환경운동연합, KFEM) and the Green Consumer Action 21 (녹색소비자연합). The aim behind the Green Consumer Action 21 was to protect the right of consumers to be able to obtain green goods, it was established in 1996. The Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, which was founded in 1993, the largest environmental organisation in Korea at the moment, developed from 'the Research Institute for Pollution Problem of Korea (공해문제연구소)' in 1982 and the 'Anti-Pollution Movement Federation (공해추방운동연합)' in 1988. This organisation has about 50 branches nationwide today; they actively participate in various environmental issues.¹⁰⁴

There have been specific ecological issues, that attracted great attention: the phenol accident, the reclamation of *Sihwa* (시화) Lake, and the reclamation of *Saemangeum* (새만금). 325 tones of phenol was illegally discharged by a major company in the *Nakdong* (낙동) river in 1991, which is a source of drinking water. For the first time ever Korean people seriously realised the level of threat and proximity of environmental pollution.¹⁰⁵ The reclamation of *Sihwa* Lake in order to make a huge agricultural land and an industrial complex took 8 years. However, this reclamation led an ecological disaster, because fresh water became soon polluted by sewages of industries and homes surrounding the lake and the reclamation blocked a natural purification capability of fresh water by a dam.¹⁰⁶ The result of this venture has been mourned by the whole environmental movement. Despite that disaster, the Korean government since commissioned another reclamation project on an even bigger scale affecting the largest

¹⁰⁴ See the home page of KFEM, <http://www.kfem.or.kr>, dated December 20, 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Youngnam Newspaper, 18/3/1991.

¹⁰⁶ See Civil Environmental Research Centre, "How live People of *Sihwa* Lake?", 1998.

mud beaches of the country. The construction is to be completed by 2011. The environmental movement strongly and whole heartedly has opposed the reclamation of *Samangeum* and has been seriously arguing for the complete withdrawal of the project. The government changed the original plan into a more environmental friendly policy, but they have not withdrawn the construction plan.¹⁰⁷ The three issues were enough to create a watershed and contributed to the strengthening of the environmental movement in Korea.

4.2. Religious Circles

Such as any religion, Korean religions have mostly been interested in increasing their religious influence and the total number of believers; therefore ecological issues were easily ignored apart from some sporadic concerns voiced by some religious scholars. The religious circles did not seek active participation in environmental issues until the 1980s. In this section, we are going to examine the level of engagement of the two major religions present in Korea, Buddhism and Christianity with the ecological movement.

The first significant initiative put forth by the Buddhist was the foundation of the 'Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism (한국불교환경교육원)' in 1991.¹⁰⁸ There have been other Buddhist environmental organisations such as the 'Buddhists Assembly for Banishment of Pollution Movement', etc. The organisation of an Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism focused on socialising, mobilising, and providing ideas within the framework of Buddhist green thought. They opened the 'Ecological School', the 'Life Movement Academy, etc., in order to spread the Buddhist ecological theologies to the public and positively contributed to environmental disputes around Buddhist temples and development problems in the circle of Buddhism. Since 1995, various Buddhist environmental organisations have

¹⁰⁷ See the home page of KFEM, <http://www.kfem.or.kr>, dated December 20, 2003.

¹⁰⁸ See the web page, <http://jungto.org/baea/bud/01.html>, From an online article entitled, *Hangukbulkyo ui Hwankyongundong ul Dolabonda* (한국불교의 환경운동을 돌아본다, Reflecting on Environmental Movement of Korean Buddhism), by Jeonggil Yu, dated December 12, 2003.

begun to proceed in joint activities, and staged a two-day national environmental event organised by about thirty organisations on the 5th June, 1995.¹⁰⁹

Three major issues have been concerning the Buddhist environmental movement: the construction of high rise apartment buildings in front of *Beomeosa* (*Beomeo* Temple), the construction of a high speed electric railroad in *Kyeongju* city, and the golf course project around *Haeinsa* (*Haein* Temple). They vigorously campaigned against these constructions more than two years, and finally they achieved their goals. The Buddhist assembly at *Jogyeosa* (*Jogyeo* Temple) in November 1996 against the construction a golf course in *Haein* was the biggest event of environmental Buddhism, which enhanced ecological recognition within Buddhism. However, it was pointed by Jeonggil Yu, who is a secretary-general of Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism, ecological movement is still immature in terms of the continuity of the movement, the structure of the organisation, and the practicality of Buddhist green thought.¹¹⁰ In fact, most Buddhist temples are located in the many mountains of Korea, and natural destruction is a direct threat to their survival. In this sense, their ecological movements have mainly related to the temples, and did not go to a full-scale. Most Buddhist monks have traditionally hesitated to come out of their secluded temples without any specific issue, and Buddhist ecological movement has been limited by this reason in reality.

The most influential environmental organisation within Korean Christianity would be the 'Korea Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity for the Integrity of Creation (기독교환경연대)'. This organisation was the continuation of 'the Research Institute of Pollution Problems of Korea', which was founded in 1982 by the union of religious and non religious leaders, who mainly participated in the democratisation movement. In 1988, this organisation was divided into two, the secular 'Anti-Pollution Movement Federation', and the Christian 'the Peace Research Institute for Anti-Nuclear and Pollution in Korea'. The name of 'the Peace Research Institute for Anti-Nuclear and

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Pollution in Korea' was changed in 1992, to 'Environmental Institute of Korean Churches', and finally it had the contemporary name 'Korea Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity for the Integrity of Creation' in 1996.¹¹¹ This organisation published the Christian Environment Declaration in 2000, which proclaimed to preserve nature in the order of creation as the Christians' holy duty. In 2001, they had a signature-collecting campaign against the reclamation project of *Saemangeum* (새만금) beach. Within the church, they are campaigning as the 'Green Church Movement' and the 'Life Table Movement' in order to plant flowers and trees around churches and in order to use organic foods.

The 'Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism' and the 'Christian Environmental Solidarity' would be the most influential organisations in the religious context in Korea. Ecological organisations seem to mainly operate in their own domain such as the 'Korea Federation for Environmental Movement' in the secular area, the 'Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism' in Buddhism, and the 'Christian Environmental Solidarity' within the Christian churches. Although they have a communication network and may join forces on occasion, the union as close partners for the design of a master plan of environmental project of Korea is, in fact, still immature. It would be one of the urgent tasks for these great organisations in the twenty first century.

Fortunately, there are some attempts to discuss a joint plan in religious circles. The Peace Conference of Korean Religious people produced 'the Environmental Ethics Manifesto of Religious People' and published it as 'Religion and Environment (1993)'. The Korean Religious Academic Society, which is the assembly of Korean religious scholars, have organised several conferences on the 'Religion and Environmental Problem' in 1994-5, and produced the 'Environment and Religion (1997)'. In 2000, Life Culture Research Centre of Seokang University held a seminar together with religious environmental organisations in the subject of 'Environmental Culture and Religion in

¹¹¹ See the web page, <http://greenchrist.org/new/sub1.html>, dated December 20, 2003.

the 21 Century' in Dec., 2000. Christian Environmental Solidarity, Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism, Catholic Church Environmental Culture Institute, and Heaven and Earth Gratitude Assembly of Won Buddhism organised a joint 'Religion and Environment Conference' in 2001, and have determined to exchange information and respond to environmental problems together.

4.3. Academic Circles

In the multi-religious context of Korea, various religious scholars began to show concern about the ecological movement. Their interest was specially the concept of 'life', and they have been trying to articulate it for the past two decades. It was because they believed that ecological matters do not only mean environmental destruction but also indicate social matters related to human daily life such as human rights, poverty, discrimination, etc. Moreover, the contemporary ecological crisis had a great impact on traditional values based on the religious and cultural heritages. In this view, the discussion of 'life' provided social and religious issues as well as environmental matters.¹¹²

The term 'life' as an ideological concept publicly appeared in the 1980s by Chiha Kim. Since then it has been various arguments concerning its meaning, at the present day the term 'life' seems to have included in life movement, life culture, life politics, life economics, lifelogy, etc. In the Korean theological circles, it has been keenly debated since JPIC (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Order) of WCC started the project of Theology of Life-Case Study in 1994. However, it was generally conceived by some scholars such as Jaesun Park that life thought evolved from the 'Ssial (씨알, Seed) Thought' by Seokheon Ham in 1970.¹¹³

¹¹² See Samyeol Lee, "preface", *Saengmyeong ui Sinhak kwa Yuli* (생명의 신학과 윤리, Theology of Life and Ethics), (Seoul: Yeorin Munhwa, 1997).

¹¹³ Jaesun Park in his book 'Search of Life Theology of Korea' argues that the *Ssial* thought reflects human life, history, and faith. The *Ssial* (seed) as meanings of *Minjung* and life indicates a centre of the universe in this thought. Therefore, Seokheon Ham sees that life as the seed of the universe indicate the common people, history, and true faith in his Christology. See Jaesun Park, *Hanguk saemyeongsinhak ui*

In this respect, ecological (or life) thought has been discussed, because the meaning of ecology or life is inclusive and encompasses almost every areas. To help to understand the contemporary stream of this thought, it can be briefly classified by three aspects: social contexts, indigenous cultures, and ethics. Ecological theology as social context mainly argues against social structures causing the relation of justice, equality, or peace, and aims to change the unjust elements through this thought. It has been mainly discussed by Chiha Kim in the secular circle, Yongbock Kim, and Samyeol Lee in Christianity. In the context of indigenous cultures, ecological theology deal with the cultural or religious elements in Korea. It aims to find ecological theology from Korean cultures and thoughts, and tries to apply it to the present reality. It has been practiced by Jaesun Park and Jeongbae Lee who are Christian theologians. Although ethics in ecological theology is widely related to other areas, it has been researched by the Christian theologian Younghun Cho. Christian theologians were relatively more positive to ecological interest than other scholars. The reason would be probably the fact that Korea hosted the meeting of JPIC in WCC in 1990, and they were faced the need of times to respond to the contemporary ecological crisis by developing environmental theology, ecological theology, or theology of nature from the West. Korean Christianity's ecological concern was mainly a result of the conference of 'Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Order (JPIC)', which was one of the conferences of the World Council of Churches, held in Seoul in 1990, which brought about the introduction of the subject 'Integrity of Creation and Korean Theology'.¹¹⁴ Since then, many theologians have participated in the study of the ecological reinterpretation of Christian theology. Although ecological matters were lively discussed in the world as part of the theology of nature, creational theology, environmental theology, and ecological theology in the 1970s and 1980s, Korea joined in with the construction of the

Mosaek (한국 생명신학의 모색, Search of Life Theology of Korea), (Seoul: Hanguk Sinhk Yeonguso, 2000), 220-38.

¹¹⁴ See Christian Academic Society in Korea, ed., *Changjo ui Pojon kwa Hanguksinhak* (창조보전과 한국신학, Integrity of Creation and Korean Theology), (Seoul: Daehan Kidogkyo Seohwoi, 1992).

theology of life in the 1990s.¹¹⁵

Although other traditional religions such as Confucianism, Taoism, Shamanism, etc. have of course, reacted to ecological theology in their own perspective of religious or ideological aspects, their voices were much weaker than Christianity and Buddhism. It is because their numbers of believers are relatively small and their religious binding power is loose although they have a long history. Taoism and Confucianism are generally conceived as treasure houses of ecological theology themselves, because they emphasise a natural life and the harmonisation of humanity and nature as we see in the previous chapter. The interconnectedness and ascetic life of Buddhism, the natural way of Taoism, and the harmonic relationship of Confucianism have undoubtedly contained ecological elements.¹¹⁶

4.4. Summary

Korean ecological movement started with compensation movement in the 1960s, but it has grown significantly in secular and religious contexts since the 1990s though it lively campaigned against pollution in the 1970s to 80s. The Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM) and the Green Consumer Action 21 (GCA21) in the non-religious context, and the Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism (EECKB) of Buddhism and the Korea Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity for the Integrity of Creation (KCEMSIC) of Christianity in the religious context, are the major ecological organisation in Korea, they are mainly performing in their own circles though they sporadically had joint events since the 1990s. Ecological theology has been increasingly considered by religious scholars in the subject of life recently. A few scholars are interested in Korean ecological theology regarding the multi-religious

¹¹⁵ Life of theology was officially used by the program of WCC in 1993. The program was 'Theology of Life and Ecumenical Social Ethic', since then, the term 'theology of life' was widely used.

¹¹⁶ See Environmental Education Centre of Korean Buddhism, ed., *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunje* (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Thought and Environmental Problem), (Seoul: Mosaek, 1996).

context while others focus on their own religious themes.¹¹⁷

At present, the greatest issue among ecological concerns has been concentrated on the reclamation of *Samanguem* initiated and constructed by the government of Korea. Although there are a lot of resistance put up by environmental organisations, how successful they might be we do not know. However, it is certain that *Samanguem* has substantially influenced the ecological movement and provides a chance to reconsider the directions or strategies in the long term. It is, of course, important to cope with the ever emerging ecological issues requiring instant attention, but it is, probably, more significant to make a long term master plan which would lead people to change their way of life, and the government to set national policies addressing ecological concerns. In this view, ecological theology itself has a significant responsibility to lead the ecological movement in the long term. Unfortunately, the ecological movement and thought do not seem to move significantly closer to this ideal. This twenty first century has, I believe, obviously provided this opportunity to do so.

5. Conclusion

Through a brief survey in the two chapters, we have seen what the Korean context means religiously and ecologically through rise, establishment, and influence of the religion and the ecological movement of Korea. The religious context of Korea has several characteristics. First of all, the tradition of Korea has the accumulated layer structure of multi-religions in the society. It means that each religion has the integrated practical or ritual elements of other religions as well as maintaining its own identity and vitality. The inter-reaction between religions was inevitable for their settlement and development in the multi religious context, and their influences were naturally exchanged in people's lives. Therefore, even though somebody identified him/herself as a believer of one religion, it is not strange that s/he has various elements of other

¹¹⁷ These scholars as all Christian theologians are Jeongbae Lee, Jaesun Park, Yonghun Jo, etc. Lee published 'Korean Life Theology (1996)', Park 'Reflection on Korean Life Theology (2000)', Jo 'The View of Nature in East and West and Christian Environmental Ethics (2002)'.

religions. The three thinkers, who will be researched in this thesis, is no exception. Although they have their own major religion, they also involved other religious elements. Secondly, the Korean mentality pursues harmonisation and reconciliation in the accumulated tradition of the multi-religions. As we have seen in the Korean history, harmonisation and reconciliation between religions was emphasised in various ways. Under the circumstance of religious pluralism in people's daily life, harmonisation was the essential issue for the mutual coexistence though there was a dominant religion according to the dynasty. Harmonisation and reconciliation were the natural phenomena in the mentalities of the common people as well as religious scholars. In this respect, the term 'Korean' itself implies the multi-religious context which people absorbed various religions into their own tradition. Therefore, it is obvious that Korean ecological theology, which is mainly dealt with in this thesis, should be considered in this multi-religious context in order to suggest an alternative to people who were multi-religiously oriented before the ecological crisis.

As we have seen, the ecological movement in Korea has a relatively short history. Both secular and religious sides have mainly focused on the contemporary sporadic ecological issues, and they do not seem to have a long term strategy which could lead people to prevent the crisis as an alternative measure. Therefore, each religion or thought, which might have a capability to be able to change people's cosmology or lifestyle as they have done throughout history, has a great responsibility, and the ecological theology should be discussed in various ways within these religions or thoughts. After all, these religious and ecological backgrounds are essential to understand Korean ecological theology through Chiha Kim, Pomnyun, and Hyunju Lee.

In the next second part as the main body of this thesis, we shall look at the three thinkers' main ecological theology particularly relating to the understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature. The first chapter of the second part will discuss Chiha Kim who has his background in Donghak, the second chapter will deal with Pomnyun who is a Buddhist monk and in the last chapter

of the second part we will turn our attention to Hyunju Lee who is a Methodist minister. Each chapter will examine in the same order: the life of each thinker, their understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature, and finally characteristics of each thinker's ecological theology. These three thinkers as I mentioned before have been closely related to the contemporary ecological movement. This second part will help understand how the contemporary ecological theology grew in Korea, and we will finally assess their contemporary ecological theology through a comparison of each thinker's identical understanding of the relationship.

**PART TWO: ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGIES OF CHIHA KIM
(1941~), POMNYUN (1953~), AND HYUNJU LEE
(1944~)**

CHAPTER THREE: THE EXPOSITION OF CHIHA KIM'S ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

1. Introduction

In the first part of the thesis, we looked at the religious and ecological context of Korea. The multi-religious context throughout the long history provided religious pluralism and syncretism simultaneously and the beginnings of the ecological movement. This second part will examine tangible ideas, which imply unique characteristics related to Korean ecological theology, particularly through the three thinkers' understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature. They are all prominent representatives of their religion in relation to ecological theology. Therefore, this second part is divided into three chapters according to the sequence of the three thinkers: Chiha Kim, Pomnyun, Hyunju Lee. The aim is, through the examination of their ideas concerning the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature and of how they contribute to their ecological theology and involvement, to shed light on the characteristics of Korean ecological theology.

According to the designed sequence, each chapter will carefully analyse ecological theology in the following order: biography, the ideological base of their ecological theology, the exposition of their main ideas and the characteristics of their ecological theology. However, it has to be said that they have different expressed by different terminology; therefore everything possible will be done to avoid confusion. Many Korean terms using Chinese characters will also be used in order to convey more precise meaning and there may be no accurate English term for some important concepts.

Chiha Kim's ecological theology has been closely related to the well-known 'life thought'. He, as the founder of life thought devoted himself to the development of life thought through his major works and publications. His ecological theology was

expressed through life thought. The main ideas of his life thought are influenced by the thought of Donghak, and developed with *Ki* philosophy. In this respect, this chapter will mainly analyse his understanding of the relationship among all existences.

Though Chiha Kim is still alive, he has already been widely recognised as one of the leading Korean writers and thinkers of the ecological theology at the present, especially, for his ‘life thought (生命思想)’, which is an ideological source to reform the society and culture in the religious pluralistic context of Korea. It has influenced almost all areas including literature, the environment, religion, culture, and even the social-political movement. The concept of ‘*Saengmyeong* (生命, life)’ believed and expressed by Chiha Kim has been discussed particularly in the ecological theology in order to overcome the environmental crisis, and Kim has always been in the centre of various arguments about the concept of ‘life’. Though the concept of life has been discussed in various scientific areas and religious circles, life as an ideological form was systemised mostly by Kim and is widely referred to as ‘life thought’ in Korea. Chiha Kim has insisted that ‘life’ is a key for the liberation of human beings and nature amid the various contemporary crises.

Chiha Kim has also been known as a resistance poet during the dictatorial government of the 1960s and 70s, and he adapted the style of poetry called ‘*Damsi* (譚詩, Ballad type of poetry)’. He wrote satirically and cynically about the government. He soon became a well-known person in literary circles and the democratisation movement at that time.¹¹⁸ However, since the 1980s, he has been recognised rather as a thinker

¹¹⁸ Various scholars assessed Chiha Kim’s resistant mind in the perspectives of ‘poetry and politics’, ‘tradition and reality’, and ‘confrontation and symbiosis’. See Kicheol Wi, “Salaitneun Munhak eul Wihayeo (살이있는 문학을 위하여, For a Living Literature)”, and Junman Hyeon, “Si wa Jeongchijeok Sangsangryeok (시와 정치적 상상력, Poetry and Political Imagination)”, in “Kim Chiha Geu ui Munhak kwa Sasang (김지하 그 문학과 사상, Chiha Kim His Literature and Thought)”, *Segyeo* (세계, The World), 1985; Wonsik Choi, “Kim Chiha Ron, Daerib kwa Gongaeng (김지하론, 대립과 공생, Discussion of Chiha Kim, Confrontation and Symbiosis)”, *Hanguk Hyeondaesi Yeongu* (한국현대시 연구, Study of Modern Poetry of Korea), (Seoul: Mineumsa, 1989); and Siyoung Lee, “70nyeondae Si-Shin Kyeonglim kwa Kim Chiha Sireul Jungsimeuro (70년대 시-신경림과 김지하 시를 중심으로, 70’s Poetry-In the centre of Kyeonglim Shin and Chiha Kim)”, *Dongseo Munhak* (동서문학, Literature of the East and the West), Nov., 1990.

promoting life thought than a poet, and his various writings related to life thought have been published. On the whole, taking on various roles participating in social and cultural activities, Kim has been called as a resistance poet, a thinker, a philosopher, an ecological campaigner, a social campaigner, etc. His energetic activities in many areas have been based on his life thought, which has greatly contributed to the ecological theology the multi-religious context of Korea.

Therefore, this chapter will firstly examine the life of Chiha Kim, before proceeding to analyse Kim's concept of life. The chapter will then examine his understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature, which he drew from the metaphysical insights of Donghak (東學, the eastern studies) and *Ki* (氣), and look at how his ecological theology took on the form of 'life thought'. Finally, the characteristics of his ecological theology will be analysed.

2. The Life of Chiha Kim

I will give a brief outline of Chiha Kim's life, because it is essential to know his background before understanding his life thought. His personal life story will be surveyed by this sequence as follows: his early life in poverty, the resistance era, the experience of awakening, the consolidation of his life thought, and finally his religious background.

2.1. Early Life in Poverty (1941-1958)

Chiha Kim was born as the only son of his parents in the small city of Mokpo, in the southern coastal part of Korea, on 4th February 1941 as Yeongil Kim. He was brought up in the tradition of Donghak and Catholicism on his father's side, and Buddhism on his mother's side.¹¹⁹ His background later became his ideological soil: his life thought reflects the religious pluralism of Korea. He lived in poverty and had to struggle to

¹¹⁹ His great-grand-father was one of *Donghak*'s local leader, his grand-father was a Catholic Christian. His grand-mother and mother were Buddhists: see Chiha Kim, *Sasanggihaeng II* (사상기행, The Journey of Thought II), (Seoul: Silcheon Munhaksa, 1999), 68-71.

survive.

He also experienced the Korean War (1950-1953). The matter of ‘living and dying’, therefore, was close to him in his daily life from his early years. After the Korean War, he and his family, such as everybody at that time, were in severe difficulties, and they moved to Wonju city. When he was a junior high school pupil he was awarded a prize in one of the painting contests, and this later became a motivation to enter the department of Aesthetics in Seoul National University. He also met a Catholic bishop who introduced Christianity to him in this period. When he was a senior high school pupil at Seoul, he was interested in modernism, metaphysics and poetry. In his youth he was interested in philosophy and art related to ‘life and death’, possibly as a result of his painful experiences in the past. He generally described himself as a weak, lean and calm child, and as a thoughtful and careful youth.¹²⁰

2.2. Years of Resistance (1959-1973)

He began his studies at Seoul University in 1959, while the political context of Korea was rapidly changing. In 1961 general Jeonghi Park seized power by a coup d’etat and the years of military dictatorship began. Furthermore, the atmosphere of the campus was soaked significantly with nationalism and socialism, and Kim was inevitably influenced.

In fact, the early 1960s were the starting period of a national cultural movement marked by the revival of folk songs, traditional Chang songs, and masque dances. Kim joined the movement and deeply recognised the political oppression and the prevalence of social injustice. His indignation about social and historical misery, brought about by his own experience, further hardened his political resistance.¹²¹ When the military government gained power in 1961, Chiha Kim became one of the South and North

¹²⁰ Chiha Kim, *Taneun Mogmareum eseo Saengmyeong ui Badaro*, (타는 목마름에서 생명의 바다로, From the Thirsting to the Ocean of Life), (Seoul: Dongkwang Chulpansa, 1991), 14.

¹²¹ Sunhong Mun, “Kim Chiha ui Saengmyeong Sasang kwa Undong ui Bburireul Chajaseo (김지하의 생명사상과 운동의 뿌리를 찾아서, Follow the Root of Chiha Kim’s life thought and movement)”, see the web page: <http://www.lifeweb.or.kr>, dated June 03, 2001.

Student Conference Representatives for uniting South and North Korea. The military government classified him as a most wanted criminal and a radical. He criticised the social injustice by poems and cynical writings against the privileged class who had power and money, thus became a famous resistance poet of *Minjung*. He changed his name to Chiha (지하, underground) Kim. When he published one of his famous poems ‘*Ojeok* (五賊, Five Enemies)’ which sharply criticised the privileged classes, he further angered the government. Nevertheless, he continued to write poems, in traditional styles, promoting revolutionary resistance and a practical movement¹²² against dictatorship and injustice. Eventually, his literary efforts in emphasising human rights and social justice were recognised when he was offered the Award of LOTUS from the Asia and Africa Writers’ Association in 1975. However, because of his imprisonment, the Award ceremony was held on 2nd December 1981 with the Award of Bruno Kreisky’s Human Rights of Austria.

During this period, he was troubled by the questions of social equality and human internal liberation, which lead to Kim’s surrender to depression. The former directed him to consider social revolution against injustice, and the latter later became an opportunity to build the philosophical basis of his life thought.

2.3. The Awakening (1980)

Since his first imprisonment for the campaign against the Korea and Japan Conference in 1964, he had been arrested four times and imprisoned for about eight years in total. In 1975 he was sentenced to death for conspiracy and rebellion against the government, but he was freed six years later.¹²³ While in prison, he was trying to overcome difficulties of prison life through Zen Buddhist meditation. One day he recognised the mystery of life when between the iron bars he noticed a blade of grass in a crack of the cemented yard floor. That little sprout provoked a deep awakening and provided

¹²² Most of his poetry has mainly dealt with Korean indigenous subject matters in a traditional style.

¹²³ Jeongseon Hong, “Kim Chiha Munhak Yeoksa (김지하 문학역사, Chiha Kim’s Literary History)”, *Jakgasegye* (작가세계, The World of Writer), No. 2, (Seoul: Segye Chulpansa, 1989), 2-24.

comfort in the darkness of prison from then on.¹²⁴ Kim described this moment as follows:

The day I noticed a blade of grass, how much I silently cried in a deep realisation! There was no special reason for that. Only the word 'life' ate into my heart so freshly and so strikingly. It drove me into unspeakable excitement and exultation of mystery.¹²⁵

Facing a common and ordinary phenomenon of nature, Kim was shocked and experienced a special moment. His discovery of the power of life in the darkness of prison provoked an awakening that could transcend both the wall of prison and the prison of the mind. Though he was kept within visible order (the wall of prison), he had discovered a hidden order (the mystery of life). At that moment, his internal and external wall collapsed and the distinction between visible and invisible order disappeared. Kim realised a 'cosmic power of life'¹²⁶ which exists everywhere, and which later became the starting point of his 'life thought'. His focus shifted from socio-political concerns to the internal recognition and experience of human beings. Let me illustrate this shift by a short exposition of Kim's concept of death, which was influenced by '*Jugim* (죽임, to kill)'. He realised that the death of people through poverty, disease, war, etc. is a result of 'killing' executed by the external factors which are either the structural injustice of power or the imbalance in nature that was caused by all kinds of artificial barriers blocking one's natural right to live. In other words, the further, most fundamental cause of killing, he believed, is contained within the distorted internal nature of human beings, which was oriented by culture, religion, philosophy, or thought, constituting one's values or worldview.¹²⁷ He felt that the matter of killing did not come simply from the socio-political system but fundamentally from one's basic

¹²⁴ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong* (생명: Life), (Seoul: Sol, 1992), 13-14; Chiha Kim, *Sasanggihaeng II* (사상기행, The Journey of Thought II), (Seoul: Silcheon Munhaksa, 1999), 33-4.

¹²⁵ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (생명과 자치, Life and Autonomy), (Seoul: Sol, 1996), 33.

¹²⁶ Gubyeng Yun, "Kim Chiha ui Sasangsegye; Daedam (김지하의 사상세계: 대담, The Ideological World of Chiha Kim: Interview with Chiha Kim)", *Cheolhak kwa Silcheon* (철학과 실천, Philosophy and Reality), no. 6, (Mar. 1990), (Seoul: Cheolhak kwa Hyeonsilsa, 1990), 160; also see Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (Life and Autonomy), (Seoul: Sol, 1996), 29-34.

¹²⁷ Chiha Kim, *Bap* (밥, Rise), (Seoul: Sol, 1995), 19-59.

worldview or the human mind itself. Therefore, he insisted on changing the way the mind operates through the realisation of the fundamental nature of life.¹²⁸ He wrote many books and articles on these ideas, and it made him famous as a thinker of ‘life thought’.

Thereafter, his main concerns were the internal, religious, and cultural factors of human mind, and he intensively read many related books such as Donghak and other Korean traditional thoughts, during the rest of his imprisonment. Kim’s awakening of a cosmic life in his imprisonment consequently became the womb of life thought.

2.4. The Consolidation of Life Thought (1981 to date)

In the 1980s, Kim was consolidating and developing his life thought through various activities such as researching Donghak, writing books, and taking part in life movements. He arranged life thought into a system based on the Donghak, started an agricultural and environmental movement, and published many books related to life thought.

Kim’s life thought was publicly presented to the world at the ceremony address of the LOTUS Award in 1981 explaining the life worldview and the co-operative coexistence.¹²⁹ In 1982, he published the books ‘*Taneun Mokmareum* (타는목마름, The Burning Thirst)’ and ‘*Nam* (남, South)’, expositing his concepts of life thought. In 1984, he published ‘*Bap* (밥, Rice)’ which emphasised the concept of ‘one grain of rice is heaven’, derived from Donghak. He showed the dignity of everything through the understanding of life. Kim started the organic farming movement called ‘*Hansalim Undong* (한살림 운동, One Living Movement)’ in 1986, and he also organised ‘*Saengmyeong Minhoc* (생명민회, The Local Network of Life)’ in 1987 for the expansion of the life worldview.

¹²⁸ Gubyeng Yun, “Kim Chiha ui Sasangseggye; Daedam (The Ideological World of Chiha Kim: Interview with Chiha Kim)”, *Cheolhak kwa Silcheon*, 162-3.

¹²⁹ Sunhong Mun, “Kim Chiha ui Saengmyeong Sasang kwa Undong ui Bburireul Chajaseo (Follow the Root of Chiha Kim’s life thought and movement)”, the web page: <http://www.lifeweb.or.kr>, dated June 03, 2001.

The year 1990 was very important for Chiha Kim and the Korean environmental organisations, because life thought was the central ideology underlying the ‘*Hansalim* manifesto,’ which was constructed by many civil ecological campaigners including Chiha Kim.¹³⁰ Thereafter, the term ‘life’ became a main subject in the ecological movement of Korea. The concept of ‘*Hansalim* (한살림, one living),’ which means ‘one life’ and ‘living together’ on the basis of life thought, became the focal point, and various environmentalists approved life thought as one of the major alternative proposals in order to overcome the ecological crisis.

In the 1990s, Kim published numerous books related to life thought, such as ‘*Taneun Mokmareum eseo Saengmyeong ui Badaro* (타는 목마름에서 생명의 바다로, From Thirsting to the Ocean Life)’ (1991), ‘*Saengmyeong* (생명, Life)’ (1992), ‘*Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (생명과 자치, Life and Autonomy)’ (1996), and ‘*Youlneyo ran Mueot-inga?* (올려란 무엇인가, What is *Youlneyo*?)’ (1999) etc. Kim was deeply interested in the spiritual realisation of life through the *Youlneyo* movement. *Youlneyo*, an ancient Korean word, means a central sound of the cosmos. Kim promoted the spiritual experience of *Youlneyo*.

2.5. Kim’s Religious Background

Kim grew up in a religiously diverse family. His great-grandfather was one of Donghak’s local leaders, and his grandfather was a Catholic Christian. His maternal grandfather was an enlightenment campaigner in the early 20th century, and his maternal grandmother was a Buddhist. Kim’s ideological world has been closely related to religious pluralism that has been expressed in his writings.

He was familiar with the Catholic Church since the time he was a secondary school pupil in Wonju.¹³¹ In 1970, Kim met Haksun Ji (지학순), who was a most influential

¹³⁰ See the web page http://www.hansalim.or.kr/han_lec_R2_1.html, dated 10/5/2001.

¹³¹ The small city of Wonju having a strong Catholic Church background, it has been recognised as a centre of the Catholic social movement. Wonju Parish of the Catholic Church had the organisation of Catholic Labour Youth at that time.

figure in the Catholic civil movement, and he was baptised and given the Christian name Francisco in 1971. He was impressed by the Catholic civil movement, which showed the balance between social participation and spiritual concern, and was particularly interested in the Social Principle of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).¹³² This influence helped him retain a positive view of Christianity. He was also interested in *Minjung* theology, which emphasised Jesus' ministry of liberating the oppressed. However, Christianity's dualistic approach to reality by its distinction between heavenly things and earthly things caused him to turn away from the Catholic Church. He thought that a dualistic view leads to tension within this hierarchical structure.¹³³ Kim, who fought against the injustice of the hierarchical structure imposed by a socio-political power, could not endure this view. Though he actively participated in many Catholic social activities for years, he does not seem to have been involved in a deeply theological way.

Kim has not mentioned Zen Buddhism, Ki philosophy, Book of Changes, indigenous thoughts, etc. very often. He was, however, deeply interested in these religions and thoughts. When he was a university student, he joined the 'Our Culture Research Institution'¹³⁴ which studies Korean traditional cultures. Actively working in this institution, Kim extended his knowledge and understanding of the traditional religions and cultures. His knowledge was further deepened while in prison, through avidly reading various books on Donghak, Zen Buddhism, Ki philosophy, Taoism, the I Ching, etc. Furthermore, he practised Zen Buddhist meditation and ascetic exercises every day.¹³⁵ Ironically his imprisonment matured his thought both philosophically and religiously.

¹³² Suhong Mun, "Kim Chiha ui Saengmyeong Sasang kwa Undong ui Bburireul Chajaseo (Follow the Root of Chiha Kim's life thought and movement)" <http://www.lifeweb.or.kr>, dated June 03, 2001.

¹³³ Gubyung Yun, "Kim Chiha ui Sasangsegye; Daedam (The Ideological World of Chiha Kim: Interview with Chiha Kim)", *Cheolhak kwa Silcheon*, 163-4.

¹³⁴ The institution as a student organisation in Seoul University was constituted for the purpose of studying the traditional religions and culture. The research was mainly led by Dong-il Cho and Woo-sung Shim at that time.

¹³⁵ Gubyung Yun, "Kim Chiha ui Sasangsegye; Daedam (The Ideological World of Chiha Kim: Interview with Chiha Kim)", *Cheolhak kwa Silcheon*, 160, 163; Chiha Kim, *Sasang-gihaeng II* (사상기행, The Journey of Thought II), (Seoul: Silchon Munhaksa, 1999), 33.

Nonetheless, Donghak thought fascinated Kim. He found that Donghak clearly considers everything to be holy. In his argument, Donghak manifests that all activities of life, which everything originally and naturally possesses, are holy. In other words, all physical activities of human beings such as eating, drinking, discharging, breathing, communicating, labouring, etc., are natural parts of life, therefore are holy. He called human life 'the balance of life' or 'the balance of *Hanulnim* (한울님)'.¹³⁶ He argued that the natural order of life should not be blocked or separated by any artificial barriers, because it is holy. Donghak does not see the holy as supernatural and separated from the world but as the result of cosmic activity, which can lead to the recovery of the broken relationships between human beings, and between human beings and nature.¹³⁷ In other words, Kim recognised that everything is connected in the order of life as well as they are holy in Donghak teachings.

Consequently, Donghak provided the most significant idea for the formation of Kim's life thought and became the structural base of his thought. At the same time, in his work he includes various elements of other religions and he creatively develops during his formative years.

2.6. Summary

Kim's works display a broad range of interest and writing style as a resistance poet, an ecological campaigner and a thinker of life thought. The matter of death and life is always a key subject in his works. His realisation of 'killing' as a cause of death by his experience of poverty, the Korean War and imprisonment, led him to endeavour to resist injustice and attempted to revolutionise the socio-political structure in the 1960s and '70s in his writings.¹³⁸ He was also pushed by the National Democracy *Minjung*

¹³⁶ Gubyung Yun, "Kim Chiha ui Sasangsegye; Daedam (The Ideological World of Chiha Kim: Interview with Chiha Kim)", *Cheolhak kwa Silcheon*, 164.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 164.

¹³⁸ Gubyung Yun, "Kim Chiha Sasang Segye (The Ideological World of Chiha Kim from the Interview with Chiha Kim)", *Cheolhak kwa Hyeonsil*, 159.

Movement,¹³⁹ and produced his writings from the perspective of a social campaigner. However, in the 1980s Kim turned towards a different dimension provoked by the experience of ‘awakening’. He gradually shifted his focus to the individual mind, worldview, religious reflection, or philosophy and claimed that these provide the overall foundation for a social revolution. Kim’s engagement in life thought began in earnest.

In sum, it can be said that Kim’s life thought in his surrounding context went through three stages: socio-political, cultural-ideological, and spiritual-aesthetic. In the 1970s Kim maintained that the destruction of the dignity of humanity was caused by socio-political injustice. However, he realised that there is fundamental problem beyond that. The human mind became distorted for various reasons, and he arrived at the ideological principle of life thought in the 80s. During this period, Kim theoretically developed life thought and campaigned as part of a life movement, which promotes a life-centred worldview. In the 1990s, Kim revealed the aesthetic or spiritual tendency of life thought. He emphasised the human’s internal or spiritual realisation and experience in life thought, and this ultimate realisation and experience he called ‘*Youlnyeo* (올려, The central sound of the cosmos)’.

3. Life Thought

I will give a brief exposition of Chiha Kim’s life thought in order to introduce and clarify terms and outline the flow of ideas because it will prove helpful when we turn our attention to the analysis of Kim’s understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature, which is the topic of section 4. Therefore, this section will examine the origin of life thought, *Jugim* (죽임, killing) and *Salim* (살림, living), and the concept of life as the basic characters of life thought.

3.1. The Origin of Life Thought

Kim is one of the most influential people to express clear ecological theology in the

¹³⁹ The movement under the flag of ‘*Sammin* (三民: Three mins-Nation, Minjung, Democracy)’ was raised against the dictatorship of the military government mainly by students, intellectuals, and religious leaders.

light of Korean traditional religions. Kim's life thought as an ideological form was born in the discovery of the hidden order (mystery of life) through the awakening experience in prison in 1979. From then on, as has been mentioned in the previous section, Kim read extensively, various books on science, the Eastern traditions and religions etc.¹⁴⁰ Through this effort, Kim solidified his concept of 'life', and began to produce life thought. Kim's life thought was publicly presented to the world at the ceremony address of the LOTUS Award in 1981 for the first time as follows:

We have to create a new, concrete, and inclusive cosmology in order to achieve 'the respect and love for the dignity of life' which is the universal truth. A life cosmology and a mode of life existence in order to achieve peace and friendship between humanity and the self, humanity and humanity, and humanity and nature should emerge. This is our responsibility to make the cosmic shift.¹⁴¹

Life thought aims at the respect and love of life through a life centred cosmology, and it is based on diverse religious, philosophical, and scientific themes. Donghak significantly influenced Kim for the following reasons: firstly, Donghak's teaching requires a paradigm shift to provide a new culture or era. Donghak shows a considerable reformation tendency requiring a transformation of culture, thought, consciousness, and lifestyle in the thought of '*Hucheongaebyeok* (후천개벽, New Creation of Heaven)'.¹⁴² Secondly, the teachings of Donghak emphasise reality as a subject of daily life. An ideal kingdom is not futuristic but exists firmly in the natural or original way of life in the daily life of reality. Thirdly, Donghak avoids a conceptual, dualistic, or hierarchical tendency, and reflects a practical movement led by common people. Finally, Donghak clearly expresses the key concepts of life thought such as *Hanulnim* (한울님: Heaven or God is existing in humanity and nature), *Shicheonju* (侍天主: to serve the Lord of

¹⁴⁰ In detail, these books are Teilhard de Chardin's 'The Phenomenon of Man', A. N. Whitehead's 'Process and Reality', Lao-tzu and Jangtzu's 'Tao-Te Ching', Zen Buddhist books, Jaewu Choi and Siyoung Choi's books of Donghak, etc. New science theories, such as Relative Theory, Quantum Theory, Uncertainty Theory, etc., which raise an organic or holistic worldview against the mechanical worldview of Newton, have also been noted by him.

¹⁴¹ Chiha Kim, *Bamnara* (밤나라, The Country of Night), (Seoul: Sol Chulpansa, 1993), 323-4.

¹⁴² Donghak announces '*Hucheongaebyeok* (후천개벽, New Creation of Heaven)' as a new ideological or religious paradigm for new humanity. The previous ones as old have gone, and a new era is opening through Donghak.

Heaven) etc.¹⁴³ Although Kim's life thought was mainly influenced by Donghak, strictly speaking, his life thought developed from the concept of Donghak's *Hanulnim*, upon the foundation of the concept of *Ki*, adding some Buddhist and Taoist concepts. For example, '*Ki*', 'the order of the cosmos', 'Yin and Yang', 'change', 'Tao', '*Youlnyeo*', etc., are fundamental concepts of life, though they represent different perspectives, they have been frequently used by Kim in a similar sense. Therefore, Donghak, *Ki*, and other religious themes were, in some sense, synthesised in Kim's life thought. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that he articulates 'life' thought through the spectrum of Donghak, and creatively combines all other religious themes as part of life thought.

The main arguments of Donghak, as mentioned in the previous chapter, were 'Humanity is Heaven (*Hanulnim*/God)' and 'a human's heart is Heaven's heart'.¹⁴⁴ All human beings contain divinity in themselves, thus Donghak refused to look for a transcendent God. Rather, it says that God and humanity are united. Moreover, the second successor of Donghak, Sihyeong Choi (최시형), states:

Apart from the mind, we cannot think of God as the Lord of heaven, and apart from humanity, we cannot think *Hanulnim*. Therefore, to serve *Hanulnim* without serving humanity is like hoping for a tree without a fruit." In addition, "Heaven and earth, spirit, and creatures were originated by *Jiki*(지기), the Utmost *Ki*, *Hanulnim*, Heaven or God), and all things are the manifestation of *Jiki*. Therefore, how only people contain Heaven! There is nothing in the heaven and the earth that does not contain (or serve) Heaven, and when people eat things it means that Heaven eats Heaven. Therefore, you do not falsely harm anything, because it is to harm Heaven.¹⁴⁵

This idea implies that humanity and all things have the nature of Heaven and their dignity is contained in that. In the time of Donghak, heaven was conceived to be so

¹⁴³ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (생명과 자치, Life and Autonomy), (Seoul: Sol, 1996), 33.

¹⁴⁴ See Donghak Research Centre, ed., *Dongkyungdaejeon* (東經大全), 90; Donwha Lee, *Cheondokyo Changgeonsa* (천도교 창건사, History of the Foundation of Cheondokyo), (Seoul: Kyeonginmunwhasa, 1970), 36-7; Chul Kim, "Sicheonju wa Innaecheon, (侍天主와 人乃天, The serving of the Lord of Heaven and Humanity as Heaven)", *New Humanity*, no. 330 (September 1975), 8-9.

¹⁴⁵ Donhwa Lee, *Cheondokyo Changgeonsa* (천도교 창건사, History of the Foundation of Cheondokyo), (Seoul: Kyeongin Munwhasa, 1970), 36-37.

divine or holy that human beings could not dare to access it by common sense. Conversely, Donghak saw humanity as the possessors of the dignity of heaven. It was a revolutionary idea at that time. This concept of divinity (*Hanulnim*/The Lord of Heaven) was understood as the origin of being, the personal being, the eternal ultimate being, and the creating power in the process of change within reality.¹⁴⁶ Though Sihyeong Choi saw *Hanulnim* in the aspect of humanity, it does not mean that only humanity is *Hanulnim*/God, but it indicates that all beings carry *Hanulnim*/God as an ultimate being within themselves. Therefore, everything is high and holy as God is and humanity can be *Hanulnim*, serving the Lord of Heaven in humanity and reality. Jaewu Choi was the first person who proposed and exercised the egalitarianism in the concept of *Hanulnim* under the aristocratic society of the time.

Chiha Kim developed his life thought from Donghak's egalitarianism. On this base, he refused a discriminative or hierarchical tendency in his life thought, and considered all things holy. Kim also focuses on the present reality rather than developing a vision for the future, because *Hanulnim* is reality in the present. Donghak's teachings, in fact, refused such elements as the heaven of Christianity, the paradise of Buddhism, Utopia, or any futuristic kingdom. Instead, it focused on the 'now', 'here', or 'people' in which *Hanulnim* co-exists with everything. Thus, *Seong* (誠, to serve or achieve), *Kyeong* (敬, to make holy or respect), and *Shin* (信, to believe or experience) are realistic virtues. *Hanulnim* in life were conceived as holy activities.¹⁴⁷ In these aspects, no human being or human activity can be discriminated against by the construction of a hierarchical system of the society.¹⁴⁸ Equality, reality, universality, divinity, and practicality are key concepts in Kim's life thought. Therefore, Kim assesses Donghak as a unified universal life thought combining traditional religions:

¹⁴⁶ See Jaekyung Kim, *Donghak Sasang kwa Donghak Hyeokmyeong* (동학사상과 동학혁명, Donghak Thought and Donghak Revolution), (Seoul: Chong-ah Chulpansa, 1984), 127.

¹⁴⁷ Donghak Research Centre, ed., *Dongkyeongdaejeon* (동경대전), 159; *Yongdamyusa* (용담유사), 185; 265.

¹⁴⁸ Chiha Kim, *Taneun Mokmareum eseo Saengmyeong ui Badaro*, (From the Thirsting to the Ocean of Life), 45-7.

Donghak has unified various crucial life thoughts of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity on the basis of the centre of *Minjung* life thought which is unique to our nation. These core life principles, which originated in Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity newly promoted by the *Minjung* perspective, were creatively unified as a universal life thought in Donghak.¹⁴⁹

In sum, Kim recognised that Donghak has crucial themes adopted from the various religions of Korea, and he presented these themes in the concept of ‘life’ in an ecological way. ‘*Sicheonju* (侍天主, Serving the Lord of Heaven)’, ‘*Hanulnim* (하늘님, the Lord of Heaven or God)’, ‘*Jik i* (至氣)’, and ‘*Tao* (道)’ could be means to overcome the contemporary problems and the limitations of the mechanical worldview which lead to the ecological crisis.

3.2. *Jugim* (죽임, Killing) and *Salim* (살림, Living)

Kim’s preoccupation with life and death provided the stimulus for the establishment of his life thought. As well as that, he has been deeply suspicious of the unjust oppression of the weak by the powerful. Therefore, he sharply recognised the existence of ‘*Jugim* (죽임, to kill, killing)’ and ‘*Salim* (살림, to put life, living)’ in the world, and the matter of life and death became his major concern.¹⁵⁰

The terms ‘life and death’ are not conceived as the biological meanings but as neutral and descriptive expressions of natural phenomena, which everything possesses in their original nature. Everything has its own life and death in its natural process (way). However, an external force as any artificial intervention can distort the natural process of life and death. Kim calls this kind of external intervention *Jugim* (killing). The notion of killing points at the disturbing of the process of life; and any kind of artificial barriers such as isolation, oppression, and restricting any natural activity of any existence in the cosmos are conceived as phenomena of *Jugim*. The conducts of *Jugim* in Kim’s thinking

¹⁴⁹ Chiha Kim, *Donghak Iyagi* (동학 이야기, The Story of Donghak), (Seoul: Sol, 1994), 13.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 66-7; See also Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (생명과 자치, Life and Autonomy), (Seoul: Sol, 1996), 261-7.

are related to socio-political structure, cultural elements, and human nature.¹⁵¹ In order to replace ‘killing’ with ‘dying’ as the latter is natural, it is necessary to get rid of *Jugim*, and this total effort is called ‘*Salim* (to live or to put life).’¹⁵² Therefore, *Salim* is the means to return to the original nature of life. *Salim* means to recover the distorted way of life caused by artificial intervention through realising and exercising the nature of life.

Kim’s many encounter with death and his recognition of various artificial killers such as physical disease, starvation, poverty, and imprisonment, provoked deep internal reflection. He was always seeking to resolve both internally (spiritually) and externally (socio-politically) the problems of division and conflict between self and others, human being and nature, and furthermore, between the physical and the spiritual. His desire was, therefore, to find a way of a harmonious reality of everything living together and to recognise a deep freedom and justice in the world that would not be divided, distorted, and destroyed by *Jugim*.¹⁵³ For this reason, he continued to be interested in Christianity, Zen Buddhism, and Ki, as well as Donghak, and he finally discovered the way to the ultimate meaning of life.

Kim’s early writings in the 70s, which are mainly poems, focus on his resistance against *Jugim*, but his writings in the 80s and the 90s mainly express the mystery and joyfulness of *Salim* itself and towards a mental sublimation of *Salim* through the concept of *Yulryeo* (올려). It is evident that Kim’s understanding of life has gradually progressed from the concept of *Jugim* to *Salim*. His recognition of *Jugim* and *Salim* consequently became the origin of life thought, and seemed to naturally be the result of his deep experience of awakening and the teachings of Donghak.

3.3. The Concept of Life (生命)

Kim claims that “life cannot be defined”, because “if life is defined or fixed as it is or

¹⁵¹ Sunhong Mun, “Kim Chiha ui Saengmyeong Sasang kwa Undong ui Bpurireul Chajaseo (Follow the Root of Chiha Kim’s life thought and movement)”, 159.

¹⁵² Ibid., 162-3.

¹⁵³ Chiha Kim, *Saenmyeong* (Life), 13.

that is, the fundamental nature of life would be already lost”.¹⁵⁴ A defined understanding of life must be ‘temporal’, indicating one aspect in one moment. Therefore, he says “the processes of birth, growth, and death, the functions of self-operating, self-systematising, and self-controlling, or the nature of diversity, circulation, relatedness, and spirituality cannot be an overall definition though they all imply some aspects of life.”¹⁵⁵ It is because he understands life in its totality and not as something constructed using parts. He says “life is not substance but ‘*Saengseong* (생성, generating), because life endlessly changes through interacting with all existences without stopping at any moment.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, he paradoxically says that there is nothing but ongoing change in the cosmos and the definition ‘everything is change’ cannot be changed.¹⁵⁷ Kim’s understanding of life is eventually ‘a total process of change’ of all existences including visible substances and invisible orders whether it be organic or inorganic.

Natural science, until now, conceived ‘*Saengmyeong* (생명, life)’ in the view of organic matter or inorganic matter, as a living thing or an inanimate object. However, ...though our science cannot fully see and prove it, the total existences of the world even including a tiny mote ... are not simply inanimate objects but ‘the totality of life’ that is living. This understanding might be a basic concept of life.¹⁵⁸

In this understanding, life is ‘a total concept’ and ‘living’. These two concepts could be a key to understanding Kim’s life thought. In other words, though organic and inorganic materials can be divided and judged as living and non-living in the biological sense, the world cannot be separated in the totality of life. That is, life is not understood as the nature of an individual organism but as the nature of the cosmos, which is described by the ongoing change. In addition, all natural phenomena are conceived as the process of life. The concept of life by any partial understanding such as biological or biochemical

¹⁵⁴ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (생명학 1, Lifelogy 1), (Seoul: Hwanam, 2003), 65. The term ‘Lifelogy’ has been not used in English, but as considering its significance because of the relations and the debates in various areas, I think that it should be academically used. In this view, the term ‘Lifelogy’ will be used in this thesis.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 67.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Chiha Kim, *Bap* (Rice), 22.

approach by observing, analysing, and verifying can only present a fragmented or visible knowledge of life, it cannot reveal the invisible process or order of life. Therefore, he insists, life should be looked at from a holistic perspective, because life is 'a continuous generating change in the visible and invisible'.¹⁵⁹

It follows that the cosmos is also 'living'. He insists that the vibrating, circulating, expanding and forming of everything can be recognised as the 'spirituality of life'.¹⁶⁰ That is, the activities of life such as movement, change, transition, and process indicates the 'living' nature of life, and this 'living' nature of life is the spirituality of life. Everything in the cosmos is connected to the living activities of life, and the total activity of life is externally expressed as individual existences according to their original order. Kim does not conceive life through individual entities, but rather recognises a living totality. He says:

Life as invisible, always fresh, and endless by moving, in its process is temporally materialised. Life in its material mediation continues to move in time and space, and it can be called 'the movement of life'. ... The visible form of life appears, changes, and disappears, and through this process life continues to send a wave. After organisms disappear, life continuously remains in the state of transition and movement; this is the total process of life movement.¹⁶¹

Kim's concept of life is conceived as a total power or principle entailing all visible and invisible existences of the cosmos. This understanding was derived from the Eastern tradition.¹⁶² Not only organic existences but also inorganic materials are conceived as living things, and every entity is connected in the process of life. Invisible order or principle is also conceived as 'life'. This invisible order is temporally materialised as 'exposed order', which is visible, tangible, and describable in various life forms, and

¹⁵⁹ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy), 67.

¹⁶⁰ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (생명과 자치, Life and Autonomy), (Seoul: Sol, 1996), 36.

¹⁶¹ Chiha Kim, *Bap* (Rice), 36-7.

¹⁶² Ibid., 41-2. Kim indicates Jaewu Choi, Sihyeong Choi, Ilbu Kim, and Jeungsan Kang in *Donghak*, Gyeongheo, Manhae, and Jeongang in Buddhism, Taoism, and Ki philosophy as the Eastern tradition in the Korean context.

these visible life forms can be measured and analysed by a number or a law.¹⁶³

That idea that the earth itself is a living entity is similar to the hypothesis of Gaia by James E. Lovelock. He suggests that the planet Earth is one living organism in a biochemical sense and a self-interacting system intelligently maintaining the complexity of life.¹⁶⁴ However, Kim's understanding of life does not rely simply on 'exposed order', namely biochemistry to sustain an intelligent interacting system, but implies a deep sense of 'hidden order' in a philosophical sense. He says "life has the visible formation and the invisible principle at the same time, these phenomena of the process of generation, efflux, and change as 'hidden order' cannot be separated from the original nature of life."¹⁶⁵ The hidden order is the source or principle that maintains the movement and the changing of the cosmos.

By Kim, this understanding of life as the total concept is viewed as the ultimate proposal for tackling contemporary troubles caused by *Jugim* (killing) between human being and human being, and human beings and nature. The narrow concept of life sustained by biochemistry only leads to hierarchical, discriminative, or individual approach in treating humanity and nature and does not suppose that all things including humanity and nature belong to one life community sharing the same fate. On the one hand, Kim points out the methodological errors leading to the narrow understanding of life such as atomic, morphological, or mechanical approach in the concept of physical time, and on the other hand, he also warns an ambiguity such as inconceivability, or conceptuality in the understanding of life. In order to avoid these errors, he suggests three theories about the understanding of life:

1. The cosmic evolution (or life), internal and invisible, sustains the expansion and deepening of consciousness

¹⁶³ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy), 67-8.

¹⁶⁴ See James E. Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

¹⁶⁵ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (Life and Autonomy), 36.

2. The cosmic evolution, external and visible, is organically and systematically materialised in the various degrees of complexity and diversity;
3. These various individuals of the cosmic life make up a spiritual or organic totality in an intricate web of life.¹⁶⁶

Saying that 'Doing something in daily life (日用行事) is *Tao* (道)' means that, the form of life is brilliantly revealed in the feelings, experiences, and thoughts of people's daily life, and there are 'thought of life', 'reason of life', and 'wisdom of life'. ...The way, which people live to diligently and positively serve 'life' in their own body and practise it through the realisation of the reason of life, is the golden way. Therefore, it is said that people are Heaven, everything is Buddha, ascetic practice is Nirvana, and the real image of life is living, and *Mosim* (모심, to serve) 'the hidden order' as it is, '*Gireum* (기름, to cultivate) *Gyeol* (결, the original nature)', and to blossom in the practice of life are called as '*Salim* (살림, living). In this '*Salim*', we can see the true form of life.¹⁶⁷

Kim simultaneously overcomes the mechanical, atomic, morphological, or observational approach to the external nature of life and ideological, abstractive, or conceptual approach to the internal nature of life through the understanding of *Mosim*, which means to serve the hidden order or to cultivate the original nature, in the dynamic process of daily life, which is the true form of life. He adds:

Cosmic life is conceived as the total monistic self-systematic process of *Shin* (神, god), *Yeong* (靈, spirit), *Hwa* (化, being), *Mul* (物, substance), *Seong* (成, fulfilment), and *Hyeong* (形, formation), and points towards 'a creative evolution theory' or 'a harmony theory' jumping over the creation theory and the evolution theory as combining them by a holistic perspective. It also implies to overcome a confrontation of idealism and materialism, which was an old argument about the dualistic understanding of the world, monistically uniting them in the exposed process of the inseparable interaction between spirit and body.¹⁶⁸

The cosmic life in Kim's understanding is a living totality including material and immaterial worlds in an inseparable organic web that performs creation, evolution, and

¹⁶⁶ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy 1), 69.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 69-70.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 72.

harmony by itself without the distinction of spirit and body. Kim recognises this performance as the ‘spirituality’ or the ‘living’ of life, and it is concretely seen in all activities of humanity and nature as their original nature.

In summary, Kim confesses that an obvious definition of life is impossible, because everything is changing and this changing is life.¹⁶⁹ The change of everything is the very nature of life and the manifestation of living. The concept of life, therefore, can be understood only through the recognition of the endless change of visible or invisible phenomena in every physical, intellectual, and spiritual entity.¹⁷⁰ In other words, life cannot be conceived by a simple biological or fixed understanding, rather it is understood to be a dynamic phenomena: the process of change. Therefore, life is *Kwajeong* (과정, a process) rather than *Jonhae* (존재, a being), and a total form, rather than an individual or independent one. The relationship between humanity and non-humanity or between organic and inorganic materials is conceived in this scope.

4. Kim’s Exposition of the Relationship between Ultimate Reality (God), Human Beings and Nature

In this section, I will examine life thought in light of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature. First, I will introduce Kim’s concept of Jiki, which consists of three elements [namely *Naeyusinlyeong* (內有神靈, there is internal spirit) *Oeyugihwa* (外有氣化, there is external formation), and *Ilsejiin Gakjibulijaya* (一世之人 各知不移者也, every person should know about and take part in the unmovable relationship)] in order to establish what Kim means by ‘God’. Then I will explain the nature of God as revealed in *Hanulnim* before turning my attention to the evolutionary nature of Kim’s life thought, through which we can examine the nature of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature. The introduction of the concept of *Bulyeongiyeon* (不然基然, Yes and No) will prove useful here and will also point out the creativity of evolution.

¹⁶⁹ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (Life and Autonomy), 34-37.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 36-37.

4.1 *Jiki* (至氣, The Utmost Ki)

Kim uses the term '*Jiki* (至氣, The Utmost *Ki*)' in order to understand the relationship between the external formation and the internal principle of all existences. It is conceived as the ultimate origin, source, power or energy to form all things of the cosmos.¹⁷¹ The term '*Ki*' as derived from *Ki* philosophy¹⁷² was conceived as 'the material force or energy', which materialises all things, emphasising the ontological mystery of 'formlessness' and 'emptiness', leading to a metaphysical or conceptual tendency, rather than to the presence of a concrete reality.¹⁷³ For this reason, Kim had a negative reaction to the understanding of 'One *Ki*', and instead he took *Jiki* from the teaching of Donghak that includes mental and physical realities simultaneously. *Jiki* is not only an ultimate energy or reality but also a fundamental principle or order, and is not a mere material or a mind but an ultimate origin which creates material and mind. Above all, *Jiki* is mainly understood as a mystery, eternal, and cosmic origin or principle in nature and *Mosim* (possessing or serving) in practice.

Jiki as the original nature of all entities of the cosmos contains three elements: a creating and ordering inner spirit as '*Naeyusinlyeong* (内有神靈, there is internal spirit), its manifestation in the visible world as *Oeyugihwa* (外有氣化, there is external formation), and the interconnected relationship as *Ilsejiin Gakjibulijaya* (一世之人 各知不移者也, every person should know about and take part in the unmovable relationship)'. Kim's concept of the inner spirit is similar to the concept of the Almighty God in Christianity. The inner spirit is creator and generator of all things that exist, who continues to create. However, it is very different from the Christian God in the sense that it is part of *Jiki* and *Jiki* is not only present in everything, but it is innate in everything. Therefore, it is not a separate supreme being, but a supreme power all living and inanimate things possess. He states as follows:

¹⁷¹ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelog 1), 182.

¹⁷² 'Ki philosophy' is a system in which ancient Chinese people interpreted the world through the concept of 'Ki'. Ki is a fundamental element consisting of a substance, a cosmic chain changing, moving, and forming everything, and an order of cosmos processing by its principle.

¹⁷³ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong* (Life), 203.

Jiki (至氣, The utmost *Ki*) is a fundamental power of everything in the cosmos continuously creating and changing by *Yin and Yang*. Everything is formed and ordered by its spiritual might, it does not belong to a certain person (prophet, disciple, king, monk, and intellectual) but all creatures, everybody, all *Minjung* as living of an infinitive *Hanulnim* in everybody.¹⁷⁴

This inner spirit is the ultimate source and origin and transcendent power, which continues to create, intervene, and change all things as an immanent spirit, and it leads all kinds of activities in all things and reveals external diversity, self-systematisation, self-renewal, creative evolution, etc.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Kim does not distinguish between ‘spirit’ as a being and ‘power’ as an activity, rather he sees them as the inseparable one in the concept of *Jiki*. Kim understands that the inner spirit cannot be divided by these concepts of being and activity.

The second element of *Jiki* is the manifestation of the inner spirit in the visible world including the complexity, diversity and organic connections of all things, and the mental, emotional, and spiritual activities of the human mind. Kim calls these activities ‘love’.¹⁷⁶ Everything is an expression and a manifestation of *Jiki* as the external form of *Jiki*:

Kihwa (氣化, the external formation) is love. The totality of all changes of *Ki* accompanying all activities from a mere material shape to spiritual, divine, or mental activities, which can be visible or invisible, all complicated, eternal, chaotic, and generative actions, and all actions of love, communication, reconciliation, and mutual response, can be discovered in the concept of *Kihwa* (the external formation).¹⁷⁷

Kim’s understanding of the divine concept through *Jiki* includes the inner and the external aspects at the same time. All existences of the cosmos consist of the inner power and their external form, and these two elements.

The third element is the contribution of everything to the sustenance of the cosmos, that is, to be part of the ongoing interaction and unbreakable relationship among the existing

¹⁷⁴ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong* (Life), 204.

¹⁷⁵ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelog 1), 171-2.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

things. It requires everything to recognise that everything is connected to everything else and to actively seek to contribute to the life of the cosmos. The total cosmic life implies continuous change, generation, evolution, and efflux of the cosmos.¹⁷⁸ Everything in this total cosmic life is interconnected, and inseparably interdependent. That is, it requires us to recognise that the revealed and individualised external forms by the internal spirit or power continues to create, change, evolve, and spread in their multi-directions and degrees, and positively participate in these activities by co-operation according to their nature. Kim here implies a practicality, and calls it '*Mosim* (serving or possessing)'.¹⁷⁹

The concept of *Mosim* (serving or possessing) originates in '*Shi* (侍, serving)' the first word of '*Shicheonju* (侍天主, Serving or Possessing the Lord of Heaven), which is the most central thought of Donghak. That is, all existences of the cosmos as well as human beings possess 'the cosmic generation or life'. Kim says:

Mosim is the secret of all things, and there is nothing that does not possess or serve life in the world. Therefore, the term 'being' itself is not a right word but it should be called 'living' or 'life', because everything possesses '*Saengseong* (생성, Generating or the Ability to Generate Life)' and to serve '*Saengseong*' is to live or survive. In addition, to co-operate with *Saengseong* voluntarily, consciously, positively, and creatively is *Mosim* (serving). Therefore, there is no 'being' but 'being' is 'living'. This 'living' is a *Mosim*, a condition and mystery of life, and a secret form... However, as human beings and all things including organisms and none-living things serve it,... the eternal cosmic generation is not a substance or being, a personal being, or a fixed substance but continuously, and creatively originating, or a creatively evolution activity itself, an unrecognisable, continuous, and connected generation, which is the true reality of the cosmos and change itself.¹⁸⁰

All things have this mysterious ability to generate life in them, and this state is *Mosim*. Therefore, *Mosim* for non-human beings means the state of possessing the mysterious nature of life that is naturally led by 'the process of generation' such as creating,

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 173.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 173.

¹⁸⁰ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy 1), 174.

changing, evolving, spreading, and disappearing. *Mosim* for human beings indicates ‘a practical, self-conscious, or ethical attitude’ as a being having a cosmic life, and it is deeply related to the basic principle how people behave in all human activities such as labour, production, education, manners, economy, language, art, etc. Human beings should follow their own very nature, which have already been given to them.¹⁸¹ From the perspective of positive participation, *Mosim* can be seen very similar to the notion of faith in Christianity, because both *Mosim* of *Jiki* and faith in God mean the unity between the self and the ultimate being. However, *Mosim* of *Jiki* means that all things already possess the ability to generate life, which is the Lord of heaven, and human beings should positively, voluntarily, and self-consciously serve the Lord of Heaven existing in themselves.

In this view, the meaning of *Jiki* (至氣, the Utmost Ki) involves not only the ultimate origin as the state of *Ki* but also the positive participation as the co-operation by *Mosim*. In other words, according to Kim the Lord of Heaven or God is not a transcendental being, but the generation of life itself: a creative activity and process, and the divine breathing of life. In fact, he based this view on the thought of Jaewoo Choi of Donghak.¹⁸² The world is continuously in the process of change, and so is God. That is, God is not understood as ‘a being’ but as ‘generation’, ‘change’, or ‘process’, and this understanding of God or supernatural power is based on a dynamic action rather than a fixed being. Therefore, Kim understands that all things as possessing and serving *Cheonju* (the Lord of Heaven) become the *Cheonju* or *Hanulnim* (하느님, God), and that is how he establishes equality, relatedness, and holiness of all things of the cosmos.

Kim through the understanding of *Jiki* pursues the union of personality and impersonality, spirituality and physicality, transcendence and immanence, uniqueness and commonality, oneness and diversity, simplicity and complexity, principle and practice, and being and action. He believes that the thought of Donghak achieved to

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 155.

¹⁸² Donghak Research Centre, ed., *Dongkyeongdaejeon* (동경대전), 29.

reunite theses conceptual divisions.

Kim's argument for the cosmos being in continuous change is similar to the arguments of the process philosophy or theology by Western scholars such as Teilhard de Chardin, Alfred North Whitehead and John B. Cobb Jr.¹⁸³ According to process philosophy, the universe is always developing and always in process, an ever-changing whole in which each part includes all the others. According to this conception of reality, dualism, hierarchy and fixed truths make no sense. What matters is the development and flow that infuses all aspects of the universe.

Teilhard De Chardin as a geologist perceived the universe, and life within it, as the product of evolution. There is a process underway, de Chardin maintained, moving in a direction in which everything is joined together and finds completion. In this process, humanity is closer than other earth life forms to a higher order, and the upward evolutionary curve is unmistakeably in motion. Chardin called the final destination the 'Omega Point'. This point, he conceived, is the place - already and always in existence -, where everything converges in the perfect and realised unity of the universe, the 'spiritual and transcendent pole of universal convergence'.¹⁸⁴ He maintained that evolution contains a law of 'complexity-consciousness' that affirms the superiority of humans within the whole. Evolution for de Chardin is, above all, a raising of consciousness, especially a raising of human consciousness.¹⁸⁵ En route to this end, God is present during every part of the journey over the infinite time; to de Chardin, God is the great Creator and Re-creator. God as Christ embodies the energy and the unity of the process.¹⁸⁶ De Chardin understood the universe ecologically as a single entity. His goal was to gain recognition for this unity in the universe and to ensure our appreciation for the fact that higher level of development and greater unity go together, however, his

¹⁸³ See Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1959), Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Macmillan, 1929), John B. Cobb, *Is it Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*, (Beverly Hills, CA: Bruce, 1972).

¹⁸⁴ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1959), 291-298.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 30, 303.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 254-260.

emphasis on 'development' or 'civilisation' in terms of culture and industry, points at an anthropocentrism, can lead to a hierarchical structure, which is unacceptable for Kim.

As a mathematician, physicist and philosopher, Whitehead also understood the universe as being in a state of perpetual process or change. Everything has its own goal and proceeds toward the realisation of that goal. Thus, the world is an incredible multiplicity of entities, each creating and re-creating themselves, combining and recombining, in a fluid process where individual elements only briefly endure. As basic entities combine, the process as a whole moves towards a greater unity. For Whitehead, the process is, to a large extent, a movement of mind, but its participants possess properties, relations and patterns that do actually exist at any given point.¹⁸⁷ In his organic universe, everything is interconnected, a part of evolving patterns and processes, and all things have an intrinsic value. Whitehead's God is not a creator of the universe but the ultimate point toward which the above described process moves. His God, who preserves the uniqueness of everything and speeds it toward combination and unity, is about potentiality and the realisation of every entity's inner self.¹⁸⁸ His general vision of a philosophical and spiritual oneness springs from his evolutionary model of the universe, his sense of wholeness, and his respect for the value of each individual thing. Nevertheless, his argument is not free of criticisms regarding his approach to the divine concept that is far from Christian theism as Michael Northcott pointed out in his book.¹⁸⁹ His understanding of the ultimate being does not derive from a transcendental being such as a Christian God who created all things from nothing; rather he finds the one from the world containing everything. There is no any transcendental being that can separately exist alone away from the physical world in his understanding of unity. Although it is similar in which Chardin and Whitehead insist the continuous evolutionary process of the cosmos as one, but it is slightly different in their emphases on the ultimate direction of the cosmic evolution. Chardin refers consciousness as the overall direction, but

¹⁸⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Macmillan, 1929), 27-45.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 519-533.

¹⁸⁹ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment & Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 147-150.

Whitehead emphasises unity itself.

John B. Cobb also tried to use process theory as a template for a new Christianity so as to explicate his ecological model and the biospheric vision. Particularly, *Logos* as the principle of creative transformation can be recognised as Christ. In other words, Christ is a reference to the universal *Logos* that is active throughout all creation. He states:

Christ is thus the immanence or incarnation of the *Logos* in the world of living things and especially of human beings. Since there is no sharp line between the living and the nonliving, there is no need to stress this limitation of creative transformation or Christ to the sphere of life...Christ means predominantly the immanence of the *Logos* in the living sphere, and it is especially among human beings that he is to be found.¹⁹⁰

Thus, Christ as the image of this *Logos* is in a constant process of evolving and changing, and God is affected by the process. Therefore, God can be suffered, and enriched by taking part in all processes of changing in certain directions.¹⁹¹ However, this point of view entails that this immanent ecological God can be injured, diminished, or corrupted as dwelling in all entities of the universe, and can be defined as a progenitor of all evil and suffering.¹⁹² In this view, it is, in fact, not easy to distinguish good from evil.

Although these thinkers agree that the universe including human beings and non-human beings is in a state of an organic evolutionary process and overcomes anthropocentric and dualistic tendencies which as we have seen caused ecological crisis, they are criticised for their 'moral and ecological ambiguity in pantheism'.¹⁹³ They do not provide moral or philosophical grounds, because they do not distinguish the being of God from the creation in which moral evil and human guilt are conceived. In fact, ecological pantheism might provide a space in which sinful actions are exempted from

¹⁹⁰ John B. Cobb, *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 76.

¹⁹¹ John B. Cobb, *Is it Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*, 134.

¹⁹² See Stephen R. L. Clark, *How to Think about the Earth: Philosophical and Theological Models for Ecology*, (London: Mowbray, 1993), 82; Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment & Christian Ethics*, 150.

¹⁹³ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment & Christian Ethics*, 162.

responsibility. Kim's monistic view does not seem to be free from this criticism either. Although he conceives *Jugim* (죽임, killing), which includes all sorts of arbitrary actions against the natural order which is evil, and emphasises *Salim* (살림, living), which is to serve and follow (모심) the natural order (*Jiki*) which is good, his understanding of the relationship between the origin of this evil and the nature of *Jiki*, which is in all things, is not clear.

Nevertheless, Kim's great contribution is the highlighting of how the entire living universe weaves everything into a web of necessary interdependence, emphasising 'acting (or becoming)' rather than 'being'. Acting means changing. Process philosophers claim that the process moves towards an advanced, rational, personal, futuristic tendency underpinned by unity and harmony in accordance with Darwin's evolution theory. However, Kim's universe is moved by the original source or nature (or inner spirit) of *Jiki* which reveals itself as generation, change, and extinction, and progresses in 'multi-directions (多方向)' or 'multi-angles (多次源)'. Kim's understanding of the process involves circulation, disorganisation, spreading, disintegration, regression, etc, and Kim, therefore, denies a linear view of time as past, present, and future. He says:

There is no absolute and physical time, which passes through past, present, and future like an arrow. Time is not 'being' but 'living'. Time is only and creatively generated (or lived) when the living subject performs existential and cosmic self-actualisation, which proceeds according to its nature and spreads to multi-directions. It is not only for personal subjects (human beings) but also non-personal subjects (non-human beings), and not only human awareness but also a faint memory of a particle.¹⁹⁴

Although this understanding can explain the organic complexity of all things and their inseparable relatedness sharing the same fate, it can, however, imply a danger to justify a natural disaster. That is, an unpredictable order of the evolutionary process can justify a natural disorder. Kim, in fact, is aware of this problem, and he explains that the

¹⁹⁴ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy), 119.

complicated multi-directional and multi-angled organic relationship takes part in self-systematisation by complementing each other by mutual dependence and symbiosis. A contradictory or confrontational phenomenon can occur temporally and locally, but the total relationship still goes towards harmonised self-systematisation.¹⁹⁵ Kim claims that distortion, modification, and pollution by human beings are disorders of nature. Therefore, the nature of *Jiki* naturally reveals generation, efflux, change, etc., only if human beings do not interrupt it.

Conclusively, Kim understands the relationship between humanity and nature through the organic connectedness enabled by *Jiki* that all things possess. The internal spirit of *Jiki* is the power behind various external formations and actions, and these revealed formations and actions form the web of life. Above all, *Jiki* is spirit and substance, and it exists in all activities, and all realities including human beings and non-human beings, spirit and body. Therefore, all things follow the nature of *Jiki*, and particularly human beings, he insists, are 'the most spiritual self-conscious cosmic life' and have more responsibility than others to observe the nature of *Jiki*.¹⁹⁶ The interdependent relationship as a cosmological cycle and activity of *Jiki* reaches even the remotest particle of the universe, and *Jiki* is a total reality including visible and invisible worlds. In this sense, Kim's understanding of life simultaneously implies a cosmic power, a spiritual activity, and a true reality of substance over the anthropo- or bio-centric approach and he understands the cosmos from the unifying, holistic, or monistic perspective.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, independence of every existence must be limited and defined in their interdependent relation to other connected existences. Each thing as a relational being in a connected cosmic life has internal connectedness to *Jiki* and external interdependence to every existing thing.¹⁹⁸ Chiha Kim did not see an intrinsic value or dignity in an independent individual being, because that can lead to destruction, and to the oppression of the weak in confrontation and conflict, but rather he articulated

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 119.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 152.

¹⁹⁷ See Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment & Christian Ethics*, 125-161; Northcott typologically well classified the understanding of the cosmos as humano-, theo-, and eco-centric.

¹⁹⁸ See Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (Life and Autonomy), 68-72.

interdependence in harmony and reconciliation through a connected relation of life. Though variety and independence of every individual existence is the work of *Jiki*, everything in the cosmos works toward harmony and reconciliation through the internal connectedness of *Jiki*.

4.2. *Hanulnim* (한울님, God or the Lord of Heaven)

In Kim's life thought, the perceptions of '*Jiki*', '*Hanulnim*', and 'life' imply almost the same meanings. *Jiki* is a theoretic or philosophical understanding that explains all phenomena of the universe, *Hanulnim* is the personified *Jiki* in order to be recognised by human beings, and life is the term that emphasises an application to various areas of human life. This section will examine Kim's perception of *Hanulnim* in order to understand the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature, because he mainly describes the relationship between the divine nature and the physical world through the concept of *Hanulnim*.

The term '*Hanulnim*', which was first used by Jaewu Choi, the founder of Donghak, was understood as the Lord of Heaven (or Light), God or the Absolute.¹⁹⁹ '*Han* (韓)' here means the people of Korea, '*ul* (울)' indicates an eternal and unlimited universe and '*nim* (님)' is an honorific title addressing the king and one's parents expressing servanthood and respect. '*Hanulnim*' is the ultimate one or the universe that the people of Korea traditionally serve and respect.²⁰⁰ The term '*Hanulnim*', which is a pure Korean term, is used in the same sense as '*Chenju* (天主, the Lord of Heaven) in Donghak. 'Heaven' was traditionally considered as holy first introduced by Confucianism referring to 'an ultimate Principle'.²⁰¹ The concept of 'the ultimate Principle' or 'Heaven' had become more and more abstract and more distant from the actual life of people. Jaewu Choi revived and made it relevant to the Korean people who

¹⁹⁹ See Jaewu Choi, "*NonhakMun* (論學文, Book of Discussion)", in *Donggyeongdaejeon*, (1880).

²⁰⁰ Jangwha Hong, ed., *Cheondokyo Kyoriwa Sasang* (천도교 교리와 사상, Doctrine and Thought of Cheondokyo), (Seoul: Cheondokyo Jungangchongbu Chulpanbu, 1990), 11.

²⁰¹ Honggil Kim, ed., *Hanguk Jonggyo Sasangsa* (한국종교 사상사, Korean History of Religious Thought) Vol. 4, (Seoul: Yeonsei Daehakkyo Chulpanbu, 1992), 300.

sought a tangible God to help them to be free from difficulties of the time.²⁰²

Kim's explanation of *Jiki* is, in fact, the theoretical description of the cosmos. The concept of *Hanulnim* is empirical, practical and personal. *Hanulnim* is tangible, one is able to experience it, and communicate with it on a daily basis, whether human beings recognise that or not. *Jiki* is in everything, but calls *Hanilnim* as *Sicheonju* (侍天主, serving or possessing the Lord of Heaven). In other words, *Jiki* is called *Hanulnim* as the personal experience of human beings. It implies that humanity has a capability to recognise *Jiki* as *Hanulnim* who is the personal God. In other words, it is meaningless for humanity if *Jiki* is not experienced or recognised as *Hanulnim* through human beings' experience or participation. Chiha Kim eventually emphasises practice and participation of *Jiki* through the concept of *Hanulnim*. This empirical, practical, or personal notion in the understanding of *Hanulnim* implies a religious or moral element similar to the Christian faith. Kim identifies three characteristics of *Hanulnim*: holiness, dynamism, and equality. He states:

However, Donghak teaches that not only human beings but also all things serve the holy *Hanulnim* in themselves. Everything such as grass, insects, beasts, soil, water, air, wind, even dust possesses *Hanulnim* in themselves –It is called as *Sicheonju* (侍天主, to serve and possess the Lord of Heaven).²⁰³

Kim claims, in accordance with Donghak, that no matter how small, even as small as a dust, everything has divine holiness possessing *Hanulnim* as *Sicheonju*, and through recognising human beings can enjoy and respect the holy presence of *Hanunim* in their daily life. The notion of holiness present in everything inspires a sense of respect, care, and equality in human beings, and it implies the capability of human beings to experience *Hanulnim*. Furthermore, Kim says:

²⁰² Donghi Choi, "Donghak ui Shinkwan (동학의 신관, The Concept of God in Donghak)", *Hanguk Sasangsa* (한국사상사, The History of Korean Thought), (Iri: Weonkwangdaehak Culpanguk, 1991), 972-3.

²⁰³ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong, Gui Chalanhanchongche* (Life, The Glorious Totality), 108-9.

The one who divides Yin and Yang and initiates their movement is One *Hanulnim*. Yin and Yang were divided and began to move... and created heaven and earth, this is one *Hanulnim*... That is, *Hanulnim* is the one who endlessly creates and works in the movement of uncountable changes, and is in this movement... Therefore, the fundamental life continuously changes and moves in time and space.²⁰⁴

Hanulnim, who is working, moving, exercising, labouring, creating, and circulating, is the subject of heaven and earth, and the world... He is the one who restlessly changes and continuously creates in the endless movement. *Hanulnim* is the subject of this endless creative change and movement.²⁰⁵

Here, Kim perceives that all changes and movement of the cosmos stem from *Hanulnim* having mystical power as the divine nature of life.²⁰⁶ *Hanulnim* is the subject of various activities denoting change, movement, circulation, or process, and these activities are holy. Kim describes *Hanulnim* as a set of providential activities rather than an ontological being. Moreover, he tries to avoid an exact ontological definition of *Hanulnim*, because he believes that the concept of *Hanulnim* cannot be bound as a fixed definition in human knowledge. Instead, he expresses *Hanulnim* as ‘working’, ‘moving’, ‘exercising’, ‘labouring’, ‘creating’, and ‘circulating’.²⁰⁷ In this respect, *Hanulnim* is not a fixed reality but a dynamism which continues to act in reality and it can only be known by truly serving it.

Therefore, *Hanulnim*, who is the Lord of Heaven, can only be accessed by serving and not by a simple intellectual discourse or through a fixed ontological understanding. According to him, serving is the true activity of life, through which one can discover *Hanulnim*, and practise *Salim* (living) away from *Jugim* (killing).²⁰⁸ Actual reality, where serving is carried out, is, therefore, a significant place where Heaven (God) and earth (the physical world), spirit and substance, internal nature and external form can

²⁰⁴ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong* (Life), 132-133.

²⁰⁵ Chiha Kim, *Bap* (Rice), 62.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 202.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 132.

²⁰⁸ Chiha Kim, *Namnyeok-ttang Baethnora* (남녁땅 뱃노래, Southern Land, Song of Boat), (Seoul: Durae, 1985), 124-125.

meet. In this respect, *Hanulnim* becomes a personal God to the one who participates in the activities.

However, *Hanulnim* does not possess such attributes for example an independent will or a purpose, thus it is closer to an impersonal divinity that continuously acts according to its inner original nature or principle. One cannot pray to *Hanulnim* or expect an answer from it, one can only recognise, participate, and serve the activities of *Hanulnim*. Therefore, spirituality or communication in his understanding is to participate, serve, and live in the fundamental nature of *Hanulnim*, and *Hanulnim* is experienced in this spirituality.²⁰⁹

Kim explains that actions, which proceed towards the relationships of ‘mutual living’, ‘symbiosis’, ‘mutual aid’, and ‘mutual supplementation’, can be justified.²¹⁰ The dynamism of the ever changing and moving *Hanulnim* creates harmony and facilitates the co-existence of all things, and that is what makes it holy and good. Any other action is disobedience, thus evil. Therefore, all actions of human beings, he insists, should follow harmony or mutual supplementation relationship, and should be justified this way.²¹¹ Kim criticises ‘the theory of war of every man against every man’ by Thomas Hobbes²¹², ‘the theory of class struggle’ by Karl Marx²¹³, ‘the survival of the fittest’ by Charles Darwin²¹⁴, and ‘the theory of infinite competition’ in globalisation²¹⁵, which are based on competition and confrontation.²¹⁶ Kim calls total harmonisation ‘the creative evolution’, ‘the order of formation’, or ‘self-systematisation’.²¹⁷ In this respect, he understands that the order of food chain is also part of the ever-changing universe,

²⁰⁹ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelog), 274-7

²¹⁰ Ibid., 290.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² See Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed & trans by Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²¹³ See Claudio J. Katz, Chiha Kim, *From Feudalism to Capitalism: Marxian Theories of Class Struggle and Social Change*, (New York: Greenwood, 1989).

²¹⁴ See Darwin, Charles, *The Origin of Species*, (New York: Gramercy, 1995).

²¹⁵ See Christobal Kay, *Globalisation, Competitiveness, and Human Security*, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1997).

²¹⁶ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelog), 113-4.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

because it is essential to the generation of life. To eat rice or bread is ‘*Hanulnim* eats *Hanulnim*’.²¹⁸ Eating and being eaten, as the repetition of convergence and proliferation, is the process of circulation in harmony. However, destroying and killing for other purposes is disobedience, thus unacceptable. Every activity can only be justified in the relationship of mutual coexistence by harmony.²¹⁹ Therefore, Kim says that life continues to create a new form of life through generating, working, moving, changing, disappearing, etc., and these activities are the fundamental nature of all things. This harmonised coexistence should be the ultimate purpose of all actions, which in turn makes actions holy.

Kim claims that the bridge between Heaven and earth is serving (*Mosim*). If ‘Heaven’ simply exists as ‘Heaven,’ it is not meaningful, but by serving it can become *Hanulnim* a real God to everyone. Therefore, the concept of *Hanulnim* points toward a positive relationship between an existence and the Absolute through serving. The server, whatever it is, becomes one with *Hanulnim* through serving. Serving means to anticipate and follow the nature of life which originates in *Jiki*. In other words, serving *Hanulnim* implies that one recognises that everything has the cosmic life; there is a need to return to the original nature of the cosmic life, and to live according to the original nature. The nature of life points to the activity of *Hanulnim* that creates, changes, moves, and works in everything.²²⁰ For Kim, *Hanulnim* is not a metaphysical, mystical, or transcendent being but rather the daily life that is continuously being lived.²²¹ Therefore, all activities of life such as labouring, eating, sleeping etc. are holy, because *Hanulnim* participates in all processes of life. All things, therefore, become *Hanulnim* through their activities of life. The life of serving means to achieve unity of all things, and humanity and the world in *Hanulnim*.

Kim also insists on *Teum* (틈, a gap or distance) between the divine nature and the

²¹⁸ Chiha Kim, *Bap* (Rice), 68-9.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 114.

²²⁰ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong* (Life), pp. 132-134; *Saengmyeong, Gui Chalanhanchongche* (Life, The Glorious Totality), 104-106.

²²¹ Chiha Kim, *Namnyeok-Itang Baetnora* (Southern Land, Song of Boat), 248.

physical world as a precondition of the unity between *Hanulnim* and all things through *Mosim* (serving).²²² He has been aware of the danger of the establishing of a close relationship between the divine and the world in a monistic understanding, which raises problems regarding the distinction between two very different natures (i.e. divine nature and the physical world). Although server and served are inseparable in their activities of life, the original nature of life itself is *Hanulnim* and the one serving the original nature is different, and the original nature cannot be harmed by the server even if s/he/it does not serve. Through this distinction, Kim intends to preserve a holy, divine nature or principle, though their relationship is emphasised in the monistic understanding as inseparable. Secondly, *Teum* provides the autonomy of the server who is not subordinate. Serving can only be carried out and completed by the server's own will not by any compulsion. In this respect, freedom and independence of the physical world are conceived, and the choices of *Salim* (living) and *Jugim* (killing) depend on the participant's will. Therefore, Kim describes *Teum* as 'a creativity of life' that makes everything live in any case, and as 'a condition of love' which provides true freedom.²²³ *Teum* is a space for freedom in which one's own specific nature can independently act without any interference by others. *Teum* eventually provides an independent will, liberty, and capability to everything.²²⁴

Kim's panentheistic view in the concept of *Hanulnim* results in the recognition of the holiness of life. He says, "...we need pantheism which can be a base of cosmic humanity. It is not the one, which is either monotheistic or pantheistic, but the one which is monotheistic and pantheistic at the same time, and which is not only in heaven but also in every being. There are not many gods but one god. Divinity is in humanity as well as in all things of the cosmos. Therefore, an inanimate object has mind (spirit)..."²²⁵ In fact, this viewpoint has already been well known in the eco-theological pantheistic

²²² Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I*, 222-6.

²²³ Ibid., 225-6.

²²⁴ Ibid., 226.

²²⁵ See the web site: <http://www.munhak.com/md/98wint/09.htm>. From an online article entitled, It Needs a New Perception about Humanity: *Youlneyo* Movement by Chiha Kim, *Gyegan Munhak Dongne* (계간문학동네, Quarterly Culture Town), no. 17, (1998, winter), dated September 05, 2001.

perspective of Matthew Fox, John B Cobb, and Sallie McFague.

Matthew Fox, as a theologian advocating 'creation spirituality', in his book *Original Blessing* argues that creation is characterised as the original blessing of God upon human beings and non-human beings, life was given from the beginning, and blessing as a fundamental paradigm has remained on every existence. Therefore, Fox rejects Augustine's paradigm of the fall (original sin) and redemption.²²⁶ He insists on the recognition of earthly life and physical reality through the significance of the goodness of the creation and the embodied life of humans and nonhumans as divine grace. He proposes to participate in the original blessing and justness of creation, which points to a prior order and harmony of the cosmos, and emphasises harmonic oneness and the relationality of all things.²²⁷ In this view, Fox suggests that the panentheistic understanding emphasises an immanent divine being in everything.²²⁸ Sallie McFague in her book *The Body of God* has a similar view. McFague describes God metaphorically as having a body; that is, God as being embodied in the world is an embodied spirit and the inspirited body of the entire universe.²²⁹ She recognises the transcendent and immanent nature of God as the original source of being. Every creature in nature has a divine nature as the body of God, so it is not a mere material for human interests.²³⁰ This panentheistic view is also revealed in the argument of John Cobb, known as a process theologian, in his book *Is it Too Late?*. Cobb claims that reality is characterised by a process of being in becoming, in which everything is in an evolutionary process, and argued that all forms of life and events are relationally connected in the total process which is life. Therefore, God leads all events in the evolutionary process, and God is present in every event.²³¹

²²⁶ Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*, (Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Company, 1983), 48.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

²²⁹ Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 19-20.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

²³¹ John B. Cobb, *Is it Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*, (Beverly Hills, CA: Bruce, 1972), 134.

These panentheistic views have maintained that the divine nature belongs to creation, to everything, and to all events, and Kim holds this view through the concept of *Hanulnim*. This view offers nature some protection from the instrumental destruction by human beings, however, as Michael Northcott points out, it does not offer a philosophical ground for recognising moral evil, because of the difficulty of distinguishing the divine nature from the rest, and also, it is not possible to make something account for evil and suffering if all creation possesses some of the immanent divine nature.²³² Despite Kim's panentheistic view, he points out the presence of a *Teum*, which highlights the ontological distinction between the ultimate being and the physical world. It is that the unique nature of the ultimate being and the physical world are untouchable by the other side, but through serving we participate in the divine nature. In this sense, independence, freedom, or responsibility of humanity is understood, and the matter of evil is described by using the free will for *Jugim* (killing) that means all activities that distort, isolate and disturb the original nature of the cosmos. Kim divides the divine nature and the physical world by an ontological viewpoint but emphasises the unity of them in a conductional (action) perspective.

4.3. *Bulyeongiyeon* (不然基然, Yes and No)

Kim claims that the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature is dynamic by a creative evolution, and illustrates it through the understanding of *Bulyeongiyeon*.²³³ *Bulyeongiyeon* means that there is no a complete distinction between 'yes' and 'no', because *Bulyeon* (Yes) and *Giyeon* (No) are connected in the endless relationship and change. In other words, 'yes' can be 'no', and 'no' can be 'yes' when explaining reality. This paradoxical logic is frequently used for the understanding of the complex life phenomena.

Speaking of the shape of objects, they all look as they are, but when considering the origin of objects, it is difficult to say what it is because the fundamental principle that leads the

²³² Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment & Christian Ethics*, 162.

²³³ Chiha Kim, *Saemyeong kwa Jachi*, 234.

existences of objects is so profound and mysterious.²³⁴

This paragraph typically shows the implication of *Bulyeongiyeon*. Every reality has its visible phenomenon and its invisible principle, and a comprehensible part and an incomprehensible part. In other words, a definition of an existence, which can be reached by our thinking and knowledge, is *Giyeon* (基然, Yes), but the other one outside of what we can know exists as *Bulyeon* (不然, No). All phenomena of reality have both natures of *Bulyeon* and *Giyeon*, *Bulyeon* refers to the positive actions of life for example creating, growing, changing, moving, etc., but *Giyeon* refers to the negative actions of life that are difficult to understand, for example aging, sickness, dying, disappearing, etc. The activities of life include all natural phenomena that are seen either positive or negative by human eyes. Therefore, Kim argues that every true reality reveals its dynamism in an endless relationship between *Giyeon* and *Bulyeon*, and everything in this continuous paradoxical relationship maintains its creativity. This logic implies that all actions of reality are the dynamism of *Bulyeongiyeon*, ‘creating’, ‘changing’, ‘moving’ and ‘disappearing’ rather than ‘being’.

The dynamism of all things through *Bulyeongiyeon* indicates the change of life, and it becomes a fundamental nature of everything.²³⁵ That is, through *Bulyeongiyeon* all realities maintain harmony and balance between external and internal, positive and negative, visible and invisible, and physical and spiritual. It is not a mere synthetic unification of thesis and antithesis by Hegelian dialectic; it means the simultaneous action of *Bulyeon* and *Giyeon*. Therefore, in Kim’s understanding everything has both natures of *Bulyeon* and *Giyeon* in its dynamism, and the relationship is not understood as confrontational but as inseparable, complementary and continuous. In this dynamism of the natural and supernatural worlds, conscious and unconscious phenomena, visible and invisible realities, and external and internal natures can sustain harmony.²³⁶ Through the concept of *Bulyeongiyeon*, Kim recognises life not as a fixed form but as the

²³⁴ Jaewu Choi, *Hanguel Dongkyeongdaeheon* (한글동경대전), (Seoul: Janong, 1991), 163.

²³⁵ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (Life and Autonomy), 240.

²³⁶ Ibid., 234.

dynamic activity. Thus, for him, life is the living dynamism, and the terms of creation, evolution, change, and movement become the significant elements of the nature of life.²³⁷ However, this movement or change is not an unconditional activity, but continues to progress toward a new order by systemising (or harmonising). That is, everything, including material, mind, and spirit is combining into the one cosmic life through this process.²³⁸ Kim sees that all things by *Buhyeongiyeon* have evolved into the mutual complement and harmony, and this harmonic activity is an evolutionary direction. Above all, life is going towards the mutual complement and harmony.²³⁹

While the purpose of evolution according to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) is to reach the 'Omega Point' through the law of complexity-consciousness, where the 'Omega Point' means the 'perfect and complete unity in the universe' and the 'spiritual and transcendent poll of universal convergence',²⁴⁰ Kim claims that evolution is *Ki's* ongoing expansion into creation. This expansion does not imply an advancement from lower to higher levels of human consciousness as de Chardin suggests in his theory, but the complementary process of advancement and regression; the generation of life and the disappearance of life in the ever moving cosmos.²⁴¹

Chiha Kim also understands the evolutionary activities through the understanding of *Jeophwagunsaeng* (接化群生, Contacting, Becoming, Gathering, and Generating).²⁴²

Jeophwagunsaeng is significant. This is life movement. Human being, animal and plant, and inorganic things influence, closely communicate, and love together. So the mind of humanity, the mind of animal and plant, the mind of inanimate ones, and also the mind of the earth and the cosmos are influenced, achieve change and evolution, and finally liberate

²³⁷ Chiha Kim, , *Saengmyeong kwa Jachi* (Life and Autonomy), 36-7.

²³⁸ See Hansalnim Community, *Hansalnim* (한살림, One Living), (Seoul: Youngjin chupansa, 1990), 36.

²³⁹ See Chiha Kim, *Taneunmokmareum eso Saengmyeong eu Badaro* (From the Thirsting to the Ocean of Life), 72-73.

²⁴⁰ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1959), 291-298; 254-260.

²⁴¹ Chiha Kim, *Mungchimyeon Jukgo Heuteojimyeon Sanda* (몽치면 죽고 흩어지면 산다, If Gather, then Die, and If Scatter, then Live), (Seoul: Dongkwang Culpansa, 1991), 80-81.

²⁴² *Jeophwagunsaeng* was firstly used in the inscription of *Nanlang* by Chiwon Choi (857-?). It means to inspire all living things by contacting, and was a teaching for the living attitude as an elegant young man at that time.

all. This is *Jeophwagunsaeng*.²⁴³

Kim distinguishes between four characteristics of evolution: cycle (接, contacting), diversity (化, revealing or becoming), relation (群, gathering), and creativity (生, generating).²⁴⁴ Firstly, evolution is an open cyclical process (接) such as the ecosystem, continuously expanding to every internal and external direction.²⁴⁵ This affects Kim's concept of time. As we have already seen, Kim does not support a linear view, instead he suggests that time is not a physical reality but a virtual image which is the arithmetical interval constructed by humanity, and time as cyclical should be recognised in "the self-recognition of life itself, the liberty of the spirit, the right relationship with others, the mutual communication with nature, the production and the extinction of life, and the creative activity in their relationship".²⁴⁶ In this view, life is an unblocked continuous flowing cycle, its purpose is to faithfully keep and preserve the natural process.

Secondly, evolution is diverse (化) as there are different forms of existence that act according to their distinct nature, but they are connected in one life. At the same time, they retain independence within their interdependence. Diversity in life does not mean collision with one another but harmony in a cooperative coexistence. Having a different form and nature of each reality, life expresses its diversity and freedom. This diversity does not mean advancement in evolution but an expansion in multi-angles.²⁴⁷

Thirdly, evolution is relational (群). All diverse realities exist within a close relationship. Though reality has independence and a liberty in its diversity, this independence and liberty are limited. That is, life realities continuously affect one another in the interdependent relationship. Formation and extinction, expansion and contraction, movement and suspension, activity and pause impact upon the relationships of all

²⁴³ Chiha Kim, *Sasang-gihaeng II* (The Journey of Thought II), 59.

²⁴⁴ Chiha Kim, *Yeot Gaya eseo Ttiuneun Gyeoulpeonji* (옛가야에서 띄우는 겨울편지, Winter Letter from the Ancient Gaya), (Seoul: Dure, 1989), 98-99.

²⁴⁵ Chiha Kim, *Life and Autonomy*, 189.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 180.

²⁴⁷ See Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeong* (Life), 62-65.

existences. There is no isolated reality because all are connected.²⁴⁸ This relationship indicates numerous gathering and scattering reactions, and affects the autonomous activities of each entity. In other words, an isolated relationship means a killed life, for nothing can exist or live alone. Relationships involves both visible and invisible order, externally expressed entities and internally possessed orders that are endlessly forming, transforming, evolving, expanding, and extinguishing in their relations.²⁴⁹

Finally, evolution is creative (生). This means life has an autonomous power. By the natural order according to the inner principle or spirit and its relationship to other existences, the activity of life naturally and creatively achieves reproduction, transformation, and extinction. The creative ability of life reflects the spiritual nature of life and all physical realities are the consequence of the creativity of life. Kim believes that the source of creativity derives from an inner spiritual principle by *Bulyeongiyeon* (Yes and No).

In sum, Chiha Kim describes the relationship between all things in the concept of *Bulyeongiyeon* (Yes and No). It shows dynamism and evolution of life. The dynamic relationship of all existences includes positive and negative actions as their own original natures, and it also points out the creativity of everything. The evolutionary relationship of all realities as *Jeophwagunsaeng* (Contacting, Revealing, Gathering, Generating) shows the natures of circulation, diversity, relationship, and creativity. Ultimately, the relationship between the ultimate being, human beings and nature is formed in the dynamism and evolution of life without any artificial disturbance.

5. The Characteristics of Kim's Life Thought

In this section, we will look at several characteristics of Kim's ecological theology. Although his ecological theology has various implications, his significant key concepts

²⁴⁸ See the web site: [http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/body_e\(a3\).htm](http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/body_e(a3).htm). From an online article entitled, *A Direction for the Concretisation of Life Thought by Chiha Kim*, dated May 2, 2001.

²⁴⁹ See Chiha Kim, *Life and Autonomy*, 83-99.

can be narrowed down to these arguments: individualistic universalism (or monism) or holistic (or monistic) individual, global or local, and social applications. The influence of Chiha Kim's life thought is enormous in many areas: it has been considered not only in ecological aspects but is also widely discussed in religious, social, and even political aspects.²⁵⁰

5.1. Individualistic Universe or Holistic Individual

This part will examine the difference between individualistic universalism and holistic (or monistic) individual in relation to Kim's life thought, because the holistic view of life always causes hot debates regarding the ethical view of the particularity or uniqueness of each existence and the self identity as moral subject.

Since an Austrian physician, Erwin Schrodinger suggested a hypothesis that life can be conceived by the molecular structure of a gene through his book 'What is Life?' in 1944,²⁵¹ molecular biology was established and has remarkably developed to the point of mapping human genes in the atomic world. This atomic or reductional tendency became a scientific methodology to examine the origin of life or substance, and in philosophy to understand the concept of self or reality by the analytic-summarised approach.²⁵² Moreover, Descartes' dualistic understanding of reality as mind (reason) and material by his mechanistic cosmology provided the ground of reductionism that the all physical entities, which have no mind, can be analysed by the physical-chemical

²⁵⁰ See Buddhist Academy for Ecological Awakening, ed., *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwangyeongmunje* (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Philosophy and Environmental Problem), (Seoul: MoSaek Culpansa, 1994); Hyunhee Lee, *Donghak Sasang kwa Hyeokmyeong* (동학사상과 혁명, Thought and Revolution of Donghak), (Seoul: Chong-ah, 1989); Jongbae Lee, *Hangujeok Saemyeong Sinhak* (한국적 생명신학, Korean Life Theology), (Seoul: Methodist College Press, 1996). These books show the arguments of life in Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, etc., with cultural aspects. In addition, Kim's insistence of 'autonomy of life' has significantly affected the direction of local self-government and organisations as a new social movement: see Sunhong Mun, "Life as the Ideology of Korea Environmental Movement", *Korea Politics Society*, 1995.

²⁵¹ See Erwin Schrodinger, *What is Life?: The Physical Aspect of Living Cell*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944).

²⁵² Caver T. Yu, *Being and Relation: A Theological Critique of Western Dualism and Individualism*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), 87.

constituent elements and explained by a formula of mathematics.²⁵³ These tendencies consequently promoted individualism, rationalism, and the mechanistic worldview in the Western philosophical tradition.

In criticising these ideologies as problematic, Fritjof Capra, an American atomic physicist, points out the limitation of the bio-chemical or bio-physic approach, and suggests an alternative way by exploring the relationship between the concepts of modern physics and the basic ideas in the philosophical and religious traditions of the Far East.²⁵⁴ He points out that modern Physics is based on the mechanistic Newtonian worldview underpinned by the philosophy of Descartes dividing spirit and matter, and introduces the 'organic', 'holistic', and 'monistic' worldview of the Eastern traditions that emphasise the basic unity of the universe.²⁵⁵ Capra, therefore, promotes a 'paradigm shift' from the mechanical worldview to a holistic one in light of new biological and physical developments and the problematic phenomena of the capitalistic industrial civilisation.²⁵⁶ He claims that the right understanding of life can be conceived by 'systems thinking' not by analytical methods based on mechanistic, reductional, or atomistic approaches.²⁵⁷ Rather, the phenomenon of life or reality reveals a complicated relational network in various forms of an integrated whole. All forms of life are connected and systemised as one. Therefore, the terms 'community', 'network', 'system', or 'web' has become significant concepts to Capra's holistic understanding of life. This holistic view of reality also appears in deep ecologists²⁵⁸ or ecotheologians

²⁵³ See Ibid., 98-106; Younghun Jo, *Dongseoyang ui Jayeongwan kwa Kidogkyo Hwankyeong Yunli* (동서양의 자연관과 기독교 환경윤리, The Views of Nature in the East and West and Christian Environmental Ethics), (Seoul: Daehan Kidogkyo Seohwoi, 2002), 82.

²⁵⁴ See Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern mysticism*, (London: Fontana, 1978); *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*, (London: Wildwood House, 1982); *The Web of Life: A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter*, (London: Flamingo, 1997).

²⁵⁵ Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 18-25.

²⁵⁶ Capra, *The Web of Life*. 17ff.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 40; Capra used the term 'systems thinking' as meaning 'ecological thinking'. It means a way of thinking to understand a phenomenon from an entire account.

²⁵⁸ The idea of "deep" ecology came about because of Arne Naess, a Norwegian environmental philosopher. Arne Naess separated "deep" ecology from "shallow" ecology, which focused principally on the interests of humans. Many of the ideas of deep ecology are consistent with ancient religious and cultural philosophies. Zen Buddhism, among other religions, taught that humans should respect nature. Gandhi also taught that human beings should respect non-human life and the environment.

such as Freya Matthews, Matthew Fox, etc. They emphasise the unity and the spiritual oneness of all entities, and reveal pantheistic and panentheistic traits.²⁵⁹ Moreover, Warwick Fox, a deep ecologist, argues that personal and partial attachments to a particular reality are problematic and even harmful to life because of the tendency of self-centred.²⁶⁰

However, this holistic view can be criticised as the “denigration of personal identification and of the spatial as well as personal elements in the construction of human identity”²⁶¹ and as “distorting and subverting the real differences between human and non-human life, and reducing the extraordinary diversity of different parts of the globe”.²⁶² In this argument, it does not consequently encourage people to love and care particular parts of the earth, and individual unique identity or particularity can be easily ignored such as we can see the examples of the global monetary, multi-national companies and international market traders.²⁶³ The monistic and universalising tendencies become the enemies of the natural world, because they may not respect or consider the intrinsic dignity and uniqueness of all things.

However, there are two different tendencies in the holistic perspective of reality in relation to human identity or individual identity. Identity can be perceived universal on the basis of individualism or individual on the holistic basis. Depending on the ontological basis of identity, the definition of self is completely different. The individualistic definition, which focuses on ‘being in itself’, is the long Western tradition,²⁶⁴ and it is always problematic when one tries to universalise the self from the

Modern deep ecologists reject the idea that humans are nature's master. Instead, they urge others to view the environment as a complex system of many forms of life, none of which can dominate another. Deep ecologists say that every species has intrinsic value, and its worth cannot merely be measured by its usefulness to humanity.

²⁵⁹ See Freya Matthews, *The Ecological Self*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 146-7; Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*, 48.

²⁶⁰ See Warwick Fox, *Towards a Transpersonal Ecotheology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism*, (Boston: Shambala, 1990), 250-63.

²⁶¹ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment & Christian Ethics*, 119.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 112.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

²⁶⁴ See Carver T. Yu, *Being and Relation: A Theological Critique of Western Dualism and Individualism*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987).

individualistic perspective. The ‘universalising’ in the individualistic view and the ‘universe’ in the holistic view are fundamentally different. The fundamental question of these two views is whether the self is ‘individual’ or ‘universal’ in terms of identity, but ‘individualising’ and ‘universalising’ are obviously problematic in both views. The holistic view of reality or life particularly in Eastern traditions such as Donghak, Buddhism, Taoism, *Ki* philosophy does not ignore or reduce identity or the particularity of each existence itself, rather they emphasise connectivity, relationality, and oneness of all entities as part of their original nature as well as the physical, personal, and spiritual diversity and uniqueness of all existences.²⁶⁵ In this respect, the intrinsic dignity of everything is emphasised as much as humanity’s.

Therefore, individualistic approach to universalism eventually becomes another individualism to cause an imperialistic tendency over the other existences. That is, the individualistic understanding of universalism is an extended individualism.

‘Globalisation’ by this individualistic understanding focuses on competition or domination rather than relationality or unity. Above all, atomistic individualism as well as individualistic universalism are the same in relation to the understanding of identity of reality whether it is self or universe. Therefore, if the definition of ‘self’ or ‘individual’ whether it is according to atomistic view or universalised view is conceived as a separated and independent identity. In this view, individualist universalism is distinguished from holistic universalism.

After all, there must be a distinction between ‘individual connectivity’ and ‘universal connectivity’ in terms of the understanding of the relationship of all existences, because the understanding of individual connectivity starts from individual and the concept of holistic connectivity primarily bases on the whole. The relationality based on individualism may easily lead a centrism. That is, if the view of relational-self is based on humanity it would be anthropocentric, if it depends on God it will be theocentric, if ecosystem it will be ecocentric, and if rationality it would be rationalism. The ‘universal

²⁶⁵ See the explanation of *Jiki* in this chapter as an example.

self' in Kim's holistic view is not an expanded individual, but considers every existence of the cosmos as self in an inseparable relationship. However, it does not mean that all existences have the same quality, form, nature, and capability, but share the selfhood in the one origin. On this basis, Kim's holistic view of 'life' was presented, and he calls it 'the total cosmic life'.²⁶⁶

Kim's life thought is based on holistic universalism which emphasises the relationship of all existences as one united complex. All existences are inseparably participated into the movement of the cosmic life, and individual existence is the outcome of the movement of the cosmic life. This relationship does not only indicate the visible world but also the invisible world, and he calls it 'infinitive complexity'.²⁶⁷ The universe is, after all, infinitive complexity, and every existence participates in the nature of the infinitive complexity as generating, evolving, and changing continuously. It is Kim's holistic view of the universe. This understanding does not reduce or distort individual identity or the particularity of each existence, rather emphasises individual diversity in the continuous change of the cosmic life. The universe is not a mere assembly of individuals or one huge individual, but a complex of relationship in Kim's understanding. In this view, the scope of ethical responsibility also bases on the universal relationship rather than individual independence. Kim says that all individual experiences and activities are 'the cosmic action by the cosmic humanity'²⁶⁸, to eat bread or rice daily is conceive as that 'Hanulnim (God) is to eat Hanulnim'²⁶⁹, and 'one tiny dust possesses the whole cosmos'²⁷⁰. According to Kim, to unite the self and the cosmos means to realise that self is the cosmos and all things including even dust possesses the cosmic life as the universal individual. In this sense, the ethical responsibility of humanity should not be limited by an individualistic and anthropocentric identity.

²⁶⁶ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy), 172.

²⁶⁷ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy I), 162.

²⁶⁸ <http://www.munhak.com/md/98wint/09.htm>. From an online article entitled, *New Recognition about Humanity: Chiha Kim's Youlhyo Cultural Movement*, Munjae Lee, Culture Town, no 17, (Winter 1998), dated June 10, 2001.

²⁶⁹ Chiha Kim, *Bap* (Rice), 68.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

In sum, the holistic view in Kim's understanding of life is not the matter between *part* and *whole* in the sense of quantity, size, or number, but between separation and relationality, independence and interdependence, in and out, and linear and cyclic in the sense of quality, state, or action. Above all, Kim's holistic view of reality is based on the understanding of the 'universal self', whether the subject is an individual, community, or the globe, as opposed to individualistic view of reality based on 'individual self'.

5.2. Globalisation or Locality

The term 'globalisation' generally means the transformation of the world into a 'global village' with the aid of mass communication and economy.²⁷¹ In a neutral understanding, the concept of globalisation indicates "the existence of nation-states as relatively self-contained and autonomous units entering into increasing relationships and interaction with each other."²⁷² Globalisation is closely related to the technological revolution in the area of information processing, global communications industry, the mass media, transportation and production, which substantially influenced human culture.

Particularly the advanced technology made a global capital market and economic and financial transactions possible, and the sense of time and space has been compressed more and more. By way of the Internet communication, the differences of territorial, historical, cultural, and social patterns have weakened, and it is conceived that people as individuals and communities are increasingly losing their identities and their distinctive characteristics. The emerging homogenised global culture has featured as one of the enemies of ecology, because the particularities of indigenous people and cultures are easily ignored and destroyed as a result of globalisation.²⁷³

²⁷¹ Konard Raiser, *For a Culture of Life: Transforming Globalisation and Violence*, (Geneva: WCC Publication, 2002), 3.

²⁷² Ibid., 3-4.

²⁷³ See Amy Chua, *World on Fire : How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, (New York: Anchor, 2004). Chua eloquently fuses expert analysis with personal recollections to assert that globalization has created a volatile concoction of free markets and democracy that has incited economic devastation, ethnic hatred and genocidal violence throughout the developing world. Chua illustrates the disastrous consequences arising when an accumulation of wealth by "market dominant minorities" combines with an increase of political power by a disenfranchised majority. Chua refutes the "powerful assumption that markets and democracy go hand in hand" by citing specific

However, in Kim's holistic view of life, the globalisation process is not necessary, because everything as a cosmic life already contains a global meaning in itself. 'Globalisation' must be, therefore, seen as an artificial effort to expand the identity of individual self. In this respect, individualistic approach to globalisation is always problematic, because it creates competition and confrontation by the law of jungle as Kim already indicated.²⁷⁴ This expanding individualism that is globalisation may mislead some of the strong countries, multi-national companies, and global capital markets to dominate indigenous people and resources rather than to cooperate or harmonise each other. Therefore, globalisation and locality is not merely a matter of size but a matter of connectivity in terms of the relationship between human beings, humanity and nature, though small tribal communities had a greater degree of personal interaction and relationality than modern cities. There were a number of cities in ancient Korea whose population was over 100,000 people; their lives were dissimilar to modern city life because the extended family system more effectively maintained the sense of relatedness among members of the family than the modern nuclear family system. Therefore, individualism is problematic whether the size is individual or globe, a greater size causes a greater problem. In this view, for Kim individualism is the main culprit in destroying the uniqueness or particularity of individual or local communities.

Concerning this matter, Kim's consideration is to localise cosmic life. Here the term 'locality' is not a territorial concept, but it encompasses realistic, religious, cultural, ideological, and socio-political contexts in relation to the concept of life. Therefore, his life thought naturally contains several characteristics of locality: the use of Korean traditional features, the role of bridge building, the actual reality, and the combination of theory and practice.

Firstly, in the Korean context, Kim's life thought pursues the reinterpretation of the traditional contexts in light of the actual reality and the practical applications of the

examples of the turbulent conditions within countries such as Indonesia, Russia, Sierra Leone, Bolivia and in the Middle East.

²⁷⁴ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelog 1), 289-95.

reinterpreted traditions. It shows a balance between tradition and reality. Donghak, from which he mostly quoted in his life thought, is one of the pure Korean traditional religions. Though he used various religious concepts when developing life thought, the reason he adopted Donghak ideology as the basis is the national identity of Korean people. From an early age, his life in poverty made him recognise the victims of the westernised society, and in his youth he had a strong feeling of antagonism toward political dependence on foreign powers. He was deeply sympathetic about the loss of many good national values by westernisation. Moreover, he was deeply affected by the history of Korea and was fascinated by Korea's rich tradition and that is why he wanted to base his life thought on a very Korean and very traditional philosophy and religion, which is Donghak.²⁷⁵ He says that any thought or idea without a national basis might be regarded as a painting without paper, as a visionary project, which soon collapses, and insists on reinterpreting Korean thought in light of the actual reality.²⁷⁶ He also realised that Donghak was deeply related to the ancient Korean foundation narrative of *Dangun*, that, he insisted, moved from *Dangun* to Donghak.²⁷⁷ Donghak inherited the concepts of *Hongikingan* (弘益人間, literally translated as 'widely helping all human beings'), and *Lisechiwha* (理世治化, literally translated as 'ruling and living by the principle of the cosmos') and transformed them into *Hanulnim* and *Innaechon* (人乃天: literally translated as 'even humanity is heaven'). He insists that traditional thought should be a foundation for contemporary thought and its practice should be modernised, because the traditional concepts become a natural disposition, which has always carried on people's minds, and practice.²⁷⁸

Secondly, his concept of locality plays the role of bridge-building between East and

²⁷⁵ See Chiha Kim, *Sasang Kihaeng I&II* (사상기행, The Journey of Thought), (Seoul: Silcheon Munhwasa, 1999); This book shows that he made a journey in order to seek the traditional thought through historical places in 1984, particularly the place of Donghak.

²⁷⁶ http://shindonga.donga.com/docs/magazine/new_donga/9902/nd99020140.html. From an online article entitled, *The Last Discussion of Chiha Kim: Dangun Thought Saves the World in 21st century by Chiha Kim*, Interview by Youngbae Ann, Sindona Magazine (February 1999), dated June 03, 2001.

²⁷⁷ Danhak as modern type of Ki exercises body and mind through meditation.

²⁷⁸ See Chiha Kim, *Sasang Kihaeng II* (The Journey of Thought II), 115-133.

West, past and present, and religion and religion.²⁷⁹ His thought is not a mere synthesis, but implies creativity through this bridge building. He uses various themes from the concepts the ancient *Ki* philosophy to the understandings of the contemporary physics, and describes his life thought and develops it. Kim also plotted a new religious or ideological quest through his openness towards other religions and philosophies such as Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, and even new scientific theories. Of course, there is certainly a danger that different religious or ideological ideas may collide, but Kim's creative reinterpretation and development of these in life thought proves has been well presented. For example, he developed the concepts of *Ki*, *Jiki* into *Hanulnim*, and *Hanulnim* into life. The term 'life' plays a role as a bridge that connects the past and the present, and the East and the West. His life thought also becomes a model of a religious reconciliation in the multi-religious context.²⁸⁰ Therefore, his ecological way as he confesses implies a creative unity of different religious and ideological themes in the multi-cultural and religious society.²⁸¹

Thirdly, Kim's life thought emphasises actual reality in that he has been continuously re-illuminating all traditional thoughts and various religious themes according to the needs of the society. In the 1960s and 70s, Kim proclaimed *Minjung*, Democracy and Nation against the undemocratic military government. In the 1980s he solidified the concept of Life in the face of the great social issues of environmental destruction, and he suggested *Youlnyeo* to the materialised and desolated spirituality caused by the wave of capitalism. Though these various terms points to life, each has reflected the reality of its time, in which his purpose was to reform the socio-political, ideological-cultural, and aesthetic-spiritual spheres. His main concern is not to establish a religion, ideology, or concept but the reality in which he lives. Moreover, he denied utopia and teleological life, instead he emphasised the present, people (*Minjung*), and nature.²⁸² For this reason, he might be considered a realistic person rather than an idealistic person. He applies his

²⁷⁹ See Chiha Kim, *Teum (gap)*, (Seoul: Sol, 1995). In this book he defined the meaning of a gap as harmony and balance of thought.

²⁸⁰ See Chiha Kim, *Life and Autonomy*, 288-93.

²⁸¹ See Chiha Kim, *Bap (Rise)*, 9-17.

²⁸² Ibid.

life thought to various areas such as social-political system, agriculture, art, religious discipline, etc., and as a result, Kim's life thought has significantly influenced Korean society. The term 'life' also has been frequently used in political, economic, social, religious, literary, and artistic areas as well as ecological circle.²⁸³

Finally, Kim tried to combine thought and practice through his life thought. He prefer to use the term 'life', instead of 'Ki', 'the principle', 'order of the cosmos', 'change', 'Hanulnim', etc., in order to bring their meaning closer to the reality or the daily lives of people.²⁸⁴ Life as the total concept of reality implies theory and practice. Moreover, *Mosim* (serving) in his life thought emphasises the recognition of the unity of all existences and the daily life of serving that cosmic life (*Hanulnim*). He argued in the definition of new humanity that a thought without a promise of practice is meaningless, and a practice without a basis of thought is directionless.²⁸⁵ Kim always tried to discern the dynamism of the cosmic life through the studies of various religions, philosophies, science, or individual meditation, and practice it through taking part in various social issues for example the democratisation movement, the ecological and the unification movement. Thus, many people call Kim both a thinker and a civil campaigner.

In brief, the practical aspect of life thought can be narrowed down to the three factors: *Minjung*²⁸⁶, locality, and reality.²⁸⁷ Kim recognises that *Minjung* as the subject of life is the grass root of the society that can provide an inspiration to the unequal human society. Locality also implies various culture or religion which is already rooted in the local area. These local cultures and religions are the mental subject which provides an answer before the threatening of globalisation. His life thought has been based on the teachings

²⁸³ See [http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/body_e\(a4\).htm](http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/body_e(a4).htm). From an online article entitled, *About an Achievement of life value*, Dökyoun Lee, dated June 05, 2001.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 58-68.

²⁸⁵ See Chiha Kim, *The Journey of Thought II*, 94-115.

²⁸⁶ Chiha Kim understands *Minjung* as the national concept of the people. The meaning of *Minjung* changes according to era and circumstance. See Chiha Kim, *The Journey of Thought II*, 53-8; See also Chiha Kim, *Bap (Rise)*, 149-226.

²⁸⁷ See [http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/body_e\(a5\).htm](http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/body_e(a5).htm). From an online article entitled, *Suggest to the network of the grass root (the web of life): Chiha Kim*, by Soonhong Moon in the data's base of the web of life, dated June 10, 2001.

of Donghak and *Ki*, and additionally includes other local traditional elements such as the activities of ‘rediscovering ancient religions’,²⁸⁸ ‘meditating of *Danhak*,²⁸⁹ and ‘performing traditional musicals’.²⁹⁰ These activities are directed towards physical, intellectual, or spiritual harmony which is rooted in locality.²⁹¹ In this respect, he seems to believe that each local religion provides the most appropriate way to reach the ‘the beauty of life’ or ‘the cosmic humanity’, and emphasises life thought based on locality. He also insists reality of life rejecting an utopianism. Life itself is real for Kim. These three elements are the basic practical elements of his life thought.

5.3. Social Applications

Kim demonstrated that his life thought is not only ideological or conceptual but also practical in relation to social issues. As examples of social applications, his life thought largely influenced two areas: the agric-environmental movement and the socio-cultural movement. In 1986, *Hansalim* (한살림, literally translated as ‘the one living’ or ‘living together’) was organised under the spirit of ‘living together with nature and humanity’.²⁹² The aim of the organisation was to achieve a peaceful world providing new agricultural products and introducing a new lifestyle of friendship with nature. These activities are based on the life worldview, which emphasises the proper relationships between human beings and nature, and among human beings. Kim, as one of the founders, continuously worked both as a designer who provided the philosophical or theoretical background, and as a teacher who educated members of the organisation.

²⁸⁸ As Kim has especially reinterpreted Dangun thought, which is the establishment ideology of ancient Korea, it is becoming a hot issue in the area of Korean ancient history.

²⁸⁹ *Danhak* is a training method of mind and body through breathing and meditating based on traditional thought. See <http://www.my.netian.com/~sunuion/gee/gee13.html>. From an online article entitled, Dangeon Breathing Method, dated June 03, 2001.

²⁹⁰ These artistic activities through music, dance, and painting with many artists has influenced life culture creation. See the website: <http://www.munhak.com/md/98wint/09.htm>. From an online article entitled, *About Youlno Culture of Chiha Kim*, interview by Munjae Lee, Culture Town, (Winter 1998), dated June 05, 2001.

²⁹¹ See the home page of the web of life: http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/board_view.html?&number=28&page=1&code=board6&refnum=28&step=0&ansnum=0&num=2. From an online article entitled, *Life and Youlno*, Soonhong Moon, dated June 03, 2001.

²⁹² See the web page of Hansalim: http://www.hansalim.or.kr/hansalimRight_2.html. From an online article entitled, *Forum Data Collection of the Web of Life*, dated June 01, 2001.

Hansalim organised various agricultural product communities that were able to provide organic products, and local consumer communities that were able to purchase them through a direct delivery system. *Hansalim* connects producers and consumers, and campaigns against chemicals and pollution, promoting the practice of live-and-let-live on both sides. It is also a network, connecting rural and urban communities. Regular meetings provide the opportunity to discuss ways of co-existence and co-prosperity, and also to teach the significance of food production and agriculture, environment and nature, and the partnership between humanity and nature, and among human beings.²⁹³ The communities of *Hansalim* advocate '*Hanjipsalim* (한집살림, Living in one house)', which means everything lives together in one life, and '*Gatensalim* (같은살림, The same living)', which means everything shares the same living in an organic relationship of life.²⁹⁴ That is, all things, including human beings, co-exist, co-depend, co-live as one, and must care about one another. Organic food production is the practical reflection of these ideas. By using no chemicals in farming and food production, they preserve land, plants, insects, and even human beings. At present, *Hansalim* consists of about 30,000 households nationwide, and have dealt with around 350 types of agricultural products. The *Hansalim* manifesto in 1989 has awakened many people to ecological concern. It criticised the industrial civilisation and the mechanistic ideology, and called for the recognition of a creative evolution of holistic life and the cosmos in humanity, and finally the movement of living as one.²⁹⁵ Its philosophical background had been obviously influenced by Kim's life thought, and this famous manifesto significantly affected both the life and ecological movements in Korea.

As we have seen in the previous section, the starting point of Kim's life thought was his experience of suffering caused by *Jugim* (killing). His interest was to overcome the

²⁹³ See the web page of *Hansalim*: http://www.hansalim.or.kr/hansalimRight_2.html. From an online article entitled, *Forum Data Collection of The Web of Life*, dated June 01, 2001.

²⁹⁴ See the web page <http://www.greenreview.co.kr/archive/17jangilsoon.htm>. From an online article entitled, *Why Hansalim?*, by Ilsoon Jang, *Noksaekbipyong* (녹색비평, Green Review), no 17, Jul-Aug 1994, dated June 02, 2001; See also Gyusuk Chon, *The Thought of Lao-tzu and Jang-tzu and Eco-Anarchism*, the web site: <http://www.home.opentown.net/~bigstars/noja/12.htm>.

²⁹⁵ See the web page: http://www.hansalim.or.kr/han_lec_R2_1.html. From an online article entitled, *Hansalim Manifesto*, dated June 02, 2001.

artificial *Jugim*, and established his life thought on the perspective of *Minjung* (the people of suffering). In this view, Donghak was the typical religion for *Minjung* at that time, and it became the basis of the life thought by Kim. Therefore, he cannot think life thought without *Minjung*, and socio-cultural relevance of the life thought is essential for Kim. He in this sense has actively participated in the socio-political change of society.

The socio-cultural influence of Kim's life thought is also reflected in the institution of *Saengmyeong Minhoe* (The Web of Life). It was founded in 1994 as a life message network to seek new values, lifestyle, and a changed society on the foundation of its desire to 'change the present culture and society according to the natural flowing (order) of life'.²⁹⁶ Kim's life thought provided the ideological background, and it is one of the obvious fruits of his work since life thought emerged in the consciousness of society in the 1980s. This organisation maintains a critical perspective of the concept of 'progression' or 'development' as typically expressed in Western culture in terms of 'civilisation', or 'prosperous society' that focuses mainly on material prosperity and convenience lifestyle. Because civilisation and industrialisation aim to provide a convenient existence by material prosperity, they ensure that the society does not challenge capitalism and materialism. This stream tirelessly seeks the use of the limited resources of our planet and in turn carelessly destroys nature in the name of an anthropocentric progress. The institution believes that the grass-root network of the life movement could locally reduce numerous problems of modern society, such as environmental destruction and broken human relationships.²⁹⁷

The vision of this network is to build a life community and life culture which leads to a life-centred lifestyle of individuals and the local self-governing system of the society through a social revolution carried out by the means of ideological study and cultural movements. The network has organised a research committee for the development of life thought and local networks for the cultural life movement. Resisting anti-ecological

²⁹⁶ See the web page of the Web of Life: http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/body_a.htm. From an online transcript entitled, *Activities of Hansalim*, dated June 03, 2001.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

issues in local contexts and offering an alternative proposal to the society by means of education, they are engaging in practical activities at the moment. The aim of the network is to form local autonomous organisations that can present a strong and positive view of life thought to the society on various local issues. As a civil alternative movement, the network tries to turn ecological concerns into social and political issues as much as possible.²⁹⁸

Both the agric-environmental movement and the socio-cultural movement are the typical application of the life thought to society. This ecological movement was based on the perspective of 'being together' or 'living together', and '*Minjung*'. It believes that all forms of life is interdependent, holistic, and organic, and have equal rights to live together, for all existences are connected as one in the web of life. Without living together no one can survive. The life philosophy has, therefore, rejected the idea of contemporary capitalism based on mass production and mass consumption, a competitive structure of society, the exploitive nature of industrialisation, and material civilisation. The purpose of life thought is not only to recover the relationships between human being and nature but also to correct the relationship between human beings, which have been destroyed by materialisation of humanity, and centralisation of power.²⁹⁹ In this respect, life thought is also based on the network and autonomy of *Minjung* who is the friend of nature and the owner of the society.

In this section I looked at Kim's articulation of the holistic concept of life. This holistic view does not mean 'universalising' by an individualistic perspective but recognise individual identity as 'universal self'. It points out that all things share relationality as the origin and the fundamental nature, and they are inseparably one. Kim's idea of 'locality' implies the diversity, complexity and uniqueness of the cosmic life, and through this concept the local contexts become crucial subjects and objects. It has substantially influenced the agric-environmental and socio-cultural movement.

²⁹⁸ See http://www.lifeweb.or.kr/body_a5.htm. From an online transcript entitled, *Main Practices*, dated June 03, 2001.

²⁹⁹ Chiha Kim, *Sangmyeong kwa Jachi* (Life and Autonomy), 11-28.

6. Conclusion

So far, I examined Chiha Kim's life thought through his personal history, the basic ideas of his life thought and his understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature. The story of his personal life has shown that many difficulties led him to concern the matters of life and death. He experienced the mystery of life through his awakening in prison, and developed the concept of life into the 'cosmic or holistic life' through the teachings of Donghak and *Ki*. Life is a cosmic power and action that leads everything to be and to act. There are two kinds of action in the world: *Jugim* (killing) and *Salim* (living). *Jugim* is an arbitrary action that interrupts the natural order (the nature of life), *Salim* is to follow and participate in the nature of life.

Kim's understanding of the relationship between God (ultimate reality), humanity, and nature is also revealed in the concepts of *Jiki*, *Hanulnim*, and *Bulyeongiyeon*. *Jiki*, which is a philosophical term, is the internal principle or power and the external formation. Kim points out that the visible and invisible world are one. *Hanulnim*, which is a religious term, is present in every existence as divine, and shows that humanity and other things are one, holy and equal. *Bulyeongiyeon*, which means dynamism, reveals that all phenomena of the physical world as one. The concept of life including all these elements implies a total unity of all things in a holistic and conductional (action) perspective. The relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature is inseparable within the change or movement of life. These three realities of God, humanity, and nature are one in 'life'.

Kim's dynamic metaphysical understanding of life indicates a principle, an origin, and a fundamental nature that everything shares. Life cannot be exactly defined when narrowed down to individual existences, because it is not only a physical entity but also a process, change, and action that affect the whole cosmos. Kim, therefore, insists that

life should be recognised as the totality of the cosmos.³⁰⁰ The totality is conceived as an organic interconnection within the cosmos in the oneness of life combining entities with substance and spirit. The fundamental nature of everything is dynamic: *Bulyeongiyeon*, is the manifestation of the union between body and spirit, external formation and internal power, Yin and Yang, and positive and negative action. The creativity and the connectedness of everything are maintained in this dynamism. Kim calls this total dynamism 'life'. In the sense of human ethical responsibility, Kim insists that our action must be based on the recognition of our total union of ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature and when we act accordingly, we serve or possess (*Mosim*) this original nature of life.

Kim's ecological theology contains various significant characteristics and practical implications. That is, he sees all existences in the holistic view of life as one, and recognises them the holistic and cosmic life on the basis of dynamic relationality. The universe, humanity, nature and the cosmic life possess a universal identity. Everything is originally one, though everything has its own uniqueness, diversity, and complexity. His life thought includes the concept of locality, which considers the local contexts and reality as the subjects and objects and indicates 'here', 'now', 'tradition', and 'the reality' as the foundation of solving problems. In the Korean multi-religious contexts, therefore, traditional religious themes, practice, and spiritual experience are at the heart of the understanding of ecological theology. He has shown a Korean way of ecological theology that opposes the destructive tendencies of division, confrontation, competition, materialistic capitalism, industrial civilisation, individualistic anthropocentrism, technological development, mechanistic worldview, etc., which mostly came from outside Korea.³⁰¹ Life thought became one of the good examples, which demonstrates the combination of Korean traditional culture and the pressing issues of present society. In this respect, Kim's life thought has influenced agricultural, environmental, social, cultural, and religious areas.

³⁰⁰ Chiha Kim, *Bap (Rice)*, (Seoul: Sol, 1995), 107, 122-3.

³⁰¹ Chiha Kim, *Life and Autonomy*, 38-9; 45.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EXPOSITION OF POMNYUN'S ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse Pomnyun's understanding of the relationship between God (ultimate reality), humanity, and nature through his ecological theology. Pomnyun as a Buddhist monk is one of the most active people in relation to the ecological theology in Korean Buddhism. Through his ecological theology we will see how Korean Buddhism approaches the ecological theology and how Buddhists understand the relationship between ultimate reality, humanity, and nature. In order to analyse Pomnyun's ecological theology, this chapter will firstly examine his life and his cosmology, and will look at his exposition of the relationship between the ultimate reality, humanity, and nature, and finally articulate the characteristics of his ecological theology in the views of connectivity, egalitarianism, and the balanced practice.

Korean Buddhism is closest to Zen Buddhism. The most common forms of Korean Zen Buddhism were adopted from the insights of the Hua-yen School of Chinese Buddhism which maintains the ideal of unity and balance between meditation and philosophy.³⁰² Korean Zen is much closer to Chinese Chan than to the Rinzai and Soto forms of Zen practiced in Japan. Korean Zen practice is known as less bound by strict rules and conventions than many of its Japanese counterparts. Japanese Buddhist monks receive training mostly in a single monastery by a single teacher before they take up a post as a married priest in a village or city temple. Korean monks, however, observe the *Vinaya* (the Book of Discipline as the body of ethics and disciplines prescribed by Buddha) while wandering from monastery to monastery learning from different teachers in order to refine their insight into Zen.³⁰³ Korean Zen Buddhism traditionally adheres to the practice of '*Donojeomsu* (頓悟漸修, Once Awakening and Gradual Cultivation)', which

³⁰² See J. Baird Callicott, *Earth's Insights*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 88-90.

³⁰³ Kerry Brown & Joanne O'Brien, ed., *The Essential Teachings of Buddhism*, (London: Rider, 1989), 222.

is the united form of *Seonjong* and *Kyojong*, taught by the monk Jinul.³⁰⁴ This form of Buddhism serves as a background for Pomnyun.

In fact, Korean Buddhism maintained a distance from the problems caused by the culture of mass production, consumption, and the capitalisation of Korean society, because the major concern of most Buddhist were traditionally to seek mental enlightenment or liberation through the cultivation and meditation of the individual thus they showed less interest in the material or physical matters of life. Before the ecological and cultural crisis in modern Korean society, Buddhism was generally conceived as a powerless or pre-modernistic religion, no more than an attractive alternative in the seeking of a meaningful life. The reason for this perception was that Buddhism more or less took communication with the outside world for granted in order to avoid the influence of worldly life for which Buddhism has often been criticised.³⁰⁵

Pomnyun was one of the pioneers and key thinkers who introduced the Buddhist perspective to the public arena, especially concerning ecological issues. He is the founder of 'Environmental Education Institute of Korean Buddhism', and actively participates in the Korean ecological movement. His writings have evoked an appreciation of the Buddhist aspects of ecological theology inside and outside Korean Buddhism. He has also enthusiastically participated in the social issues regarding justice, peace, and unification through the organisation called 'Pure Land Society (정토회)', which he founded in 1988. This organisation has 8 national and 8 international branches, and about three thousand members are working with him at the moment. He has supported the poor in South-East Asian countries for example India, Myanmar, and Thailand, and helped many North Korean refugees in China.

Pomnyun claims that the ecological crisis is caused by human lifestyle based on 'a wrong desire by one's misjudged values', and insists that 'transforming lifestyle is the

³⁰⁴ See chapter 1.

³⁰⁵ Ilji(일지), "Hyeondae Seonui Wigijeok Insik (현대선의 위기적 인식, The Critical Recognition of modern Zen), in Dongkuk University Seokrimhwoi, Nonchon (논총, Total Discussion) 33, 2000.

core' of the ecological theology.³⁰⁶ Therefore, his ecological theology is closely related to the cosmology which may lead one's sense of value and lifestyle, and aims to identify the right relationship between the ultimate reality, humanity, and nature based on this cosmology. Pomnyun strongly adheres to the Buddhist cosmology and its doctrines. In this respect, this chapter will provide us an important clue in order to understand the Korean Buddhist ecological theology through the relationship between ultimate reality, humanity, and nature.

2. The Life of Pomnyun

I will give a brief outline of Pomnyun's life, which will provide us ideas on how Pomnyun has become a Buddhist monk and how his Buddhist thought has formed and evolved. His life will be examined as follows: the life before his awakening, his experiences of awakening, his life after his awakening, and his thought and work.

2.1. The Life before His *Kkaedaleum* (깨달음, Awakening)

We know very little about Pomnyun's life before he became a Buddhist monk, because monks have to sever all their connections with the outside world [called *Chulga* (出家, homelessness) which means to leave home]. Pomnyun's original name is Sukho Choi. He was born in 1953 in *Ulsan* (울산) city. When he was young, he moved to *Kyeongju* (경주) which is one of the oldest and most beautiful towns in Korea. He finished his secondary education in *Kyeongju*, which has the most famous Buddhist temple and many other traditional buildings, a town obviously influenced by Buddhism. It naturally provided him with the atmosphere of Buddhism from his early age. Sukho Choi was born 8 years after the partition of Korea when the Korean War had just finished, without reuniting the country. This result brought a more hostile and rigid relationship between North and South than before. After the Korean War, most cities, towns, and villages were destroyed, most people were struck by poverty and famine. All Korean ordinary

³⁰⁶ Pomnyun, "Saerowun Munmyeong Saerowun Ingan (새로운 문명 새로운 인간, New Culture New Humanity)", in *Globalisation and Spirituality*, the report of Religious Department by Civilians Porum in ASEM(The Asia-Europe Meeting), 2000.

people were suffering from the political, economic and emotional consequences of the war and division. As Sukho Choi came of age in the 1960s to 1970s, South Korea made a successful transition to democracy and rose to industrial prosperity, while North Korea descended deeply into isolation and poverty. The two societies lived worlds apart, their differences reinforced by the Cold War and its stigmatising propaganda.

We know little about Sukho Choi's family. His family were poor. His father worked as a servant.³⁰⁷ Choi helped out as a paper boy. When he entered the local middle school, most of his friends did not go to school because they had to work to survive. He discovered that his family was less poor, so he left school in the second year of high school in order to earn some money to support his friends.³⁰⁸ Choi appeared to be an ordinary child, who went to school and attended a Buddhist temple, whose education ceased at high school as a result of his mild, generous, and diligent nature.

2.2. His Experiences by *KKaedaleum* (깨달음, Awakening)

Sukho Choi in his '*KKaedaleum*(깨달음, Awakening)' experienced three great events that became significant turning points in his life. The first one was an opportunity to turn from ordinary life to Buddhism, the second, his realisation of his hypocrisy, through meeting a person who lost his leg and arm in the Vietnam War, and it became an opportunity to spare his inner self from all kinds of illusions. And thirdly, he experienced the ability to give up his life and death, through severe torture. These events provided him with a deep recognition for the suffering of other individuals which became more important to him than his private concerns.

One day in the early winter when Sukho Choi was sixteen years old, he was on the way home from the main building, which contains a statue of Buddha, after worship. The leading monk of the *Bunwhang* Temple (분황사), Domun (道文) called him. Choi hesitated, because he was in a hurry to prepare for his final examination. Domun asked

³⁰⁷ Pomnyun, *Jeolmeun Buljadeuleul wihan Suhaenglon* (젊은 불자들을 위한 수행론, The Principle of Practice for Young Buddhists), (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1990), 162.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 159-60.

him, ‘where are you coming from?’, ‘School, sir!’ Choi replied. Domun asked again, ‘where did you come from before you came from school?’, ‘home, sir!’, ‘before you came from home?’, ‘..... from my mother’s womb, sir!’, ‘before you came from your mother’s womb?’, ‘?’, Choi could not answer. Domun asked him again, ‘where are you going to?’, ‘home, sir!’, ‘and then?’, ‘I will die, sir!’, ‘after death?’, he could not answer that question. Domun shouted at him, ‘You! Where are you heading to so quickly without having any clue where you come from and where you are going to?’ Choi confessed later in his book, that he was shocked by this conversation, and he was paralysed for a while, as if he was given an electric shock.³⁰⁹ In this short conversation, he deeply realised that he was running aimlessly. Choi asked Domun, ‘Is there anybody who knows the answers?’ ‘Yes!’, ‘How can I know that?’, ‘Come to the temple!’ Next day Choi left home and family, and joined the temple in order to be a disciple of Buddha. This was his formal conversion to Buddhism.³¹⁰ He became a Buddhist monk adopting the name ‘Pomnyun(法輪)’. After his enlightenment, he was fascinated by Buddhist scriptures such as ‘Heart Sūtra(般若心經, *Prajñāpāramita*)’, Diamond Sūtra(金剛經, *Vajracchedika*)’, etc.³¹¹

In 1982 Pomnyun took part in an event promoting Buddhism in the temple of *Kyeongju*. People of all ages wanted to see him, and he taught them scriptures and doctrines of Buddhism. While meditating in the sanctuary, somebody knocked on his door and told Pomnyun that he wanted to be a Buddhist monk. Pomnyun thought that he was one of beggars at first, and was displeased, because he thought that a Buddhist monk could not be just anybody. Moreover, the person looked like a beggar and had lost an arm and a leg in the Vietnam War. Pomnyun suggested that he should go to other temples, but he was told that other temples rejected him. Pomnyun heard that he and his family were suffering from social prejudice after losing his limbs. Then he remembered the posters

³⁰⁹ Pomnyun, *Geumgangkyeong Liyagi I* (금강경 이야기 상, The Story of Diamond Sūtra), (Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 1995), 6.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 6-7.

³¹¹ Pomnyun, *Banyasimkyeong Iyagi* (반야심경 이야기, The Story of Heart Sutra), (Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 1996), 6.

for the event in the town proclaiming, ‘Come! Anybody who has anxiety, suffering, difficulty! Here is a good place to find peace!’ He found that everything he spoke, preached, and taught to people was hypocritical. He felt great remorse, and realised that he was filled with illusions while living in the shell of Buddhism. It was an illusion that he was a decent person as a Buddhist monk. He immediately ran to a prayer shed on a mountain and prayed before Buddha with repentance for three days and nights. He found rebirth in his religious life and activities.³¹²

Pomnyun experienced his third awakening through being tortured by policemen. Under the dictatorship at that time, many people who resisted the government were imprisoned and tortured. One morning, Pomnyun was taken into a secret place by policemen, and was tortured. One of protesters, who knew him, unconsciously gave away his name to the police under severe torture, though Pomnyun had never participated in the democratisation movement. He was brutally tortured for days. At the very point of death, he suddenly remembered his past life in which he committed so many sins. In particular, he remembered killing frogs by throwing them over rocks for fun as a boy, and he was aware that he was one of those frogs. He deeply repented that and cried. He realised that he had disobeyed the first command of Buddhism which is: do not kill anything, and Pomnyun was deeply awaked to the dignity of all kinds of life. He immediately regained a peaceful mind from severe suffering and fear, and he was soon released. His suffering and terror caused him to shift his attention from his personal development to the suffering of the society. He confessed later that the severe torture was his great teacher.³¹³

These three experiences, great turning points constantly changed him. ‘Buddhism’, ‘society’, and ‘life’ became the significant elements in his life.

2.3. The Life after His *KKaedaleum* (깨달음, Awakening)

³¹² Ibid., 86-95.

³¹³ Ibid., 162-70.

During the 1970s and 80s there was a huge democracy movement against dictatorship, and the division of South and North Korea seemed to be more rigid than ever. Pomnyun felt that he has to do something for the society. Although Pomnyun entered the Buddhist monkhood as a youth, he abandoned his robes and his temple in order to join South Korea's democratisation movement. He was arrested and tortured twice. As the movement prevailed, Pomnyun turned from political issues to social ones. He formed the '*Jungto* (or Blessed Land) Society' to offer Buddhist teachings to the full range of modern ills, from greed and poverty to environmental degradation. In 1988, he founded the '*Jungto* Society' and the 'Environmental Education Institute of Korean Buddhism'. As a Buddhist monk and leader of South Korea's *Jungto* Society, he has advanced the cause of reconciliation of South and North Korea, and human beings and nature.³¹⁴

In 1991, he was officially ordained and became the Venerable '*Jikwang Snim* (智光스님, Bright Wisdom Monk)'. However, he was more widely known as 'Pomnyun'. During the next several years, Pomnyun and his group established a free school, a medical centre and a village development program in Dongeshwari, a sixteen-village hamlet of untouchables in a destitute corner of India. However, Pomnyun was increasingly consumed by matters closer to home.³¹⁵

The people of North Korea had long been accustomed to deep poverty, but the 1990s brought floods and drought and by the mid-90s people were starving. Tens of thousands of them fled to China. Pomnyun visited these 'food refugees' repeatedly and surveyed five hundred of them in 1997 and 1998. He learned about the desperate circumstances of their lives in China and the appalling dimension of the famine in North Korea. According to his calculation some three million people had died.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ See the web site: <http://www.pomnyun.or.kr>. From an online article entitled, *Pomnyun Homepage*, dated August 2, 2003.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ His book '*The People Crossing the Duman River* (1999)' depicts the actual situation of North Korean refugees in China. He surveyed for two years and interviewed more than two thousand refugees. Also see Jeongku Kang & Pomnyun, ed., *1999 Minjokui Himang Chkgi* (1999 민족의 희망찾기, 1999 Finding a Hope for the People), (Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 1999), 22-4.

As his organization *Jungto* assisted the refugees in China, Pomnyun raised the alarm at home. ‘People are dying,’ he told South Koreans. ‘More than were killed during the whole Korean War. It’s happening right now, right at this moment.’³¹⁷ He urged them to put aside their fears and suspicions and help the North Korean people. This, he said, was the true path toward reconciliation and reunification. They responded by donating some two million dollars for food aid and thousands of articles of clothing for North Koreans. One million of them also petitioned the South Korean government to send massive quantities of food and medicine to the North.³¹⁸ Meanwhile, Pomnyun carried his message to relief organizations and governments abroad, beseeching them to increase their efforts in North Korea and to end Cold War embargoes. In New York, his local followers committed themselves to assist North Korean farmers with fertilizers, seeds and tools and to build a factory there that now supplies essential nutrients for eleven thousand children.³¹⁹

Pomnyun’s ongoing advocacy and relief efforts reflect his belief that Buddhists must engage with the real world and act to relieve suffering. He does so together with other Buddhists around the world and also with like-minded Buddhist and Christian NGOs in Korea.

2.4. Pomnyun's Thought and Work

Pomnyun’s relief work is part of his larger vision for ‘a new human society’ that reconciles people with nature on the basis of the Buddhist concept of ‘interrelatedness (or interconnectedness)’. He looks at the present suffering arising from competition and confrontation between human beings, and human beings and nature. As a good teacher he tries to convey his complex vision in a simple way. What the world really needs, he

³¹⁷ Pomnyun, *Tongilro Ganeun Gil* (통일로 가는길, The way Going to Union), (Seoul: Jeongto Culpan, 1999), 163.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 129-35.

³¹⁹ Pomnyun appealed to many international organizations for help for the North Korean people. See Pomnyun, *Tongilro Ganeun Gil* (The Way Leading to Union), 142-173.

says, is 'Pure Minds, Good Friends, and Clean Lands.'³²⁰ In this sense, Pomnyun's thought largely focuses on matters of 'Environment', 'Peace', and 'Unification'.³²¹

In fact, he is not merely a Buddhist monk, rather is an environmental thinker and social activist. His whole life is concerned with the subjects of environment, peace, and unification drawing on Buddhist principles. Pomnyun has worked as a member of the 'Environmental Education Institute of Korean Buddhism' and has given lectures at conferences. As well as continuing to devote himself to the poor, to women, the elderly, and children. He founded hospitals and schools in India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. He believes that all people of the world belong to one family. This thought motivated him when organising aid to the North Korean refugees in China. He regards the suffering of others as his own matter, and believes that South and North Korea should be reunited. In awarding him the 2002 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Peace and International Understanding, the board of trustees recognised his compassionate attention to the human cost of Korea's bitter division and his hopeful appeal for reconciliation.

Pomnyun published more than sixteen books on the subjects of Buddhism, the environment, and peace. Concerning Buddhism, there are *Ingan Buddha gui Widaehan Sam kwa Sasang* (인간불다 그 위대한 삶과 사상, Human Buddha: His Great Life and Thought, 1990), '*Banyasimkyeong Iyagi* (반야심경 이야기, The Story of the Heart Sutra, 1991)', '*Geumkangkyeong Iyagi I&II* (금강경 이야기 I&II, The Story of the Diamond Sutra I&II, 1996-7)', etc. On the environment he wrote '*Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (불교와 환경, Buddhism and Environment, 1999)', '*Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (실천적 불교사상, Practical Buddhism Thought, 1985)', '*Jeolmeun Buljadeuleul wihan Suhaenglon* (젊은 불자들을 위한 수행, 1988), (*Mirae Munmyeong ul Ikkeuleogal Saerowun Ingan* (미래문명을 이끌어갈 새로운 인간, New Humanity to Lead the Future Culture, 1998), etc. On the matters of peace and unification, '*Bulkyo wa Pyeonghwa* (불교와 평화, Buddhism and Peace, 1999)', '1999

³²⁰ Pomnyun, *Beonnoi Soguiro Sesang Soguiro* (In Anxiety and In the World), (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1997), 143-147.

³²¹ Pomnyun, *Tongilro Ganeun Gil* (The Way Leading to Union), 43-4.

Minjok ui Himang Chagi (민족의 희망찾기, 1999 Finding Hope for the People, 1999)', 'Pomnyun Suenim ui Tongilro Ganeun Gil (법륜스님의 통일로 가는길, The Way to go for Unification with Pomnyun, 1999), etc. He also wrote several dissertations on ecological issues. Unfortunately, they have not yet been translated into English.

3. Pomnyun's Buddhist Cosmology

In this section, we will introduce the early Buddhist theories in order to explain how Pomnyun's cosmology has been formed. In the second part of this section we will look at how Pomnyun understands the mode of change which is the basis of his cosmology. In the final part, Pomnyun's understanding of the nature of the universe will be examined. Pomnyun's understanding of the cosmos is based on the teaching of early scriptures of Buddhism³²² such as the *Samyuktāgama* (雜阿含經, Lit. 'Unified Collection')³²³. In this section we will look at Pomnyun's cosmology based on the early(or ancient) Buddhist teachings of the Twelve Sense-Medium Theory (十二處說), the Four Primary Elements (四大要素說), the Five Groups Theory (五蘊說), and the Three Dharma Seals (三法印). This section will be divided into three parts: the basic theories of cosmology, the mode of change, and the nature of the cosmos.

³²² About 400 years after Buddha died, Buddhism the different interpretations of doctrines, teachers, and areas separated into two major parts: the traditional (상좌부, *Theravāda*) and the progressive (대중부, *Mahāsāṃghika*). The 400 year period before the separation is called 'early Buddhism' or 'prime Buddhism'. See the Buddhist Text Editing Committee by Weon-cheol Yun, Bong-chun Lee, etc., *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (불교사상의 이해, The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), (Seoul: Buddhism Culture College in Dong-guk University, 1997), 127-8.

³²³ *Samyuktāgama* consists of numerous short texts dealing with incidents connected with the life and work of the Buddha. *Samyuktāgama*, which is written in Sanskrit is one of the five distinguished *Āgamas* (*nikāya* the Pali version). *Āgama*, literally means 'Source of the Teaching'. It consist of the *Dīrghāgama* (長阿含經, 'Long Collection'), the *Mādhyamāgama* (中阿含經, 'Middle Collection'), the *Samyuktāgama* (雜阿含經, 'Unified Collection'), the *Ekottarāgama* (增一阿含經, 'Graduated Collection'), and the *Khuddakāgama* (小阿含經, 'Short Collection'). The *Āgama* is one of the earliest scriptures of Buddhism by Buddha, and occupies a part in the Chinese Canon known as 'the *Ta-ts'ang Ching*' (大藏經, the great Buddhist canon as the complete scriptures of Buddhism). Buddhist scriptures have the Sanskrit canon and the Pali canon. The Chinese canon was mainly influenced by the Sanskrit canon. See about the Sanskrit and the Pali canon, and Chinese canon, Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1990), 83ff, 224ff, 322-324; Between the 11th century and the 13th century, the Korean canon, the *Tripitaka Koreana* (팔만대장경) consisting of over 80,000 (wooden) blocks was issued. It mainly derives from the Chinese canon and together with supplements and other sources, is one of the finest and largest canons of Buddhism in the world.

3.1. The Basic Theories of Early Buddhist Cosmology

It is fair to say that the cosmology of early Buddhism was based on epistemology rather than ontology. That is, the cosmos itself was understood through the human perception of reality, rather than by an ontological analysis based on science. In other words, the recognition or the awareness of the observer is more significant than the ontological question of the reality or the object itself in early Buddhism. The ability of human recognition was considered as a primary element in the understanding of the cosmos. The cosmos itself should be recognised by human sense, anything, which we cannot sense, is meaningless. The cosmology of Buddhism is the epistemological reflection on the ontological interpretation of the cosmos itself.

In this view, three theories were presented for the basic understanding of the cosmos in the early Buddhism: the four primary elements theory as an ontological interpretation of the cosmos, the five aggregates theory based on epistemology, and the twelve sense-medium theory which is a synthesis of those two. This section will briefly look at these theories.

3.1.1. The Four Primary Elements (*catvāri-mahābhūtani*) Theory (四大要素說)

According to the early teachings of Buddhism, all materials were formed by the merging of four basic components that are earth (*pṛthivī*), water (*ap*), fire (*tejas*), air (*vāyu*).³²⁴ When Buddhism was about to rise in India, these four elements had widely been recognised as the most fundamental constituents of materials and Buddhism adopted this view.³²⁵

In fact, the most fundamental components of the material world were continuously

³²⁴ *Samyuktāgama* (잡아함권), collection of 13.

³²⁵ The Buddhist Text Editing Committee by Weon-cheol Yun, Bong-chun Lee, etc., *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (불교사상의 이해, The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), (Seoul: Buddhism Culture College in Dong-guk University, 1997), 352-4.

studied by the mankind, and modern Physicists continued to debate this matter until the rise of the theories of relativity and quantum. These elements were presented as the primary origin of the physical world, and used as the smallest conceivable particles within the scope of human perception. It led to the view that the body is an object and that the material world consists of solid, flowing, heating, and moving elements. Because human beings belong to the material world, and their body is formed by these four building blocks, that are not created but have always existed, humans cannot have a self in this sense.

To account for the sensing ability of humans it was argued that, among the twelve sense mediums, the five sense organs such as ear, eye, nose, tongue, and skin and the five sense objects such as sound, form, smell, taste, and touch consist of these four primary elements, and the combinations of these four primary elements constitute the forms (色, *rūpa*) of the physical world. Therefore, human beings and nature are the outcomes of the combination of the primary elements (色蘊, *rūpa* and *skandha*), and the cosmos is understood as the overall combination of materials.³²⁶

The visible world must be temporal not eternal, because combinations continuously form new things and endlessly change by its surrounding conditions. In this view, the physical world is not real. The primary elements have always existed but not exist independently, as they keep combining with each other in the visible world. In this view, Buddhists see the physical world as the result of the combined conditions of the four elements.³²⁷ Therefore, the attachment of human beings to the physical world is meaningless, which explains why Buddhists attempt to overcome their attachment to worldly possessions. It is called *Chulga* (出家, to get out of home) which means to free oneself from any attachment or possession in the world.³²⁸

³²⁶ *Samyuktāgma* (잡아함권), collection of 13.

³²⁷ Pomnyun, *Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (실천적 불교사상, Practical Buddhism Thought), (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1994), 38.

³²⁸ Ibid., 47.

Pomnyun is aware that the four primary elements theory has been out of date by modern science. He recognises that the physical world is the outcome of the different conditions of primary elements, regardless what they be, and in that sense the Buddhist teaching of the physical world is compatible with modern physics.³²⁹ That is, Buddhists see that materials consist of the primary elements, but if it goes further and further for the fundamental source, the primary elements also would be the combination of something. After all, the visible things are forms of combination, and anything cannot exist alone.

3.1.2. The Twelve Sense-Medium (āyatana) Theory (十二處說)

The twelve sense-medium theory is revealed in *Samyuktāgama* (雜阿含經), which is one of five *Āgamas* (阿含經, *Sūtra* collections) containing the early teachings of the Buddha. In this book, *Saengmun* (생문), who is a Brahman, asked Buddha, ‘How do you think about *Sarvam* (everything)?’ He wanted to know the Buddha’s understanding of the world, the cosmos and reality. Buddha replied:

A Brahman! *Sarvam* (everything) is conveyed by the twelve sense-medium, they are eye and colour, ear and sound, nose and smell, tongue and taste, body and feeling, willing and law. If you try to understand or accommodate anything without the twelve sense-medium, it would be an empty sound, and there would be doubt but no answer. Because if the twelve sense-medium does not exist, there would be also no boundary.³³⁰

This early Buddha’s teaching of the twelve sense-medium theory reveals the basic Buddhist cosmology. It means that everything of the cosmos, from the macro world such as stars, sun, moon, etc. to the micro world such as insects, viruses, etc., is accommodated by the twelve sense-medium, and there is nothing to escape from the recognition through the twelve sense-medium. This viewpoint is called ‘the twelve sense-medium theory’.

³²⁹ The close relation of modern science and Buddhism has been well presented in this book: The Buddhist Text Editing Committee by Weoncheol Yun, Bongchun Lee, etc., *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 364-85.

³³⁰ *Samyuktāgama* (雜阿含經, Lit. ‘Unified Collection’), collection of 13.

The cosmos is perceived through the six sense faculties, eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and consciousness, and the six sense-objects, colour, sound, scent, taste, texture, and phenomenon.³³¹ Nothing exists apart from that which can be perceived by the senses; therefore, everything, which exists, can be perceived by the senses. Even if a supernatural reality existed, if it cannot be perceived by the senses, it would mean nothing for the observer. It proves that the cosmology of early Buddhism is predominantly empirical. Particularly, the understanding of cosmology through consciousness (or will) and phenomenon (or law) among the twelve sense-mediums shows a realistic tendency which denies any supernatural power upon the physical world. This understanding becomes a theoretic base against the pantheistic view of the world as well as the fatalistic view.³³²

The twelve sense-medium theory, supports the epistemological approach in the understanding of the cosmos through the relationship between the subject and the object, which is cognisable and inseparable. The twelve sense-medium theory shows that the cosmology of Buddhism was based upon an actual perspective, in the relationship between subject, which recognises, and object, which is recognised, and are inseparably connected together. It claims that the reality may be an outcome of the union of the subject, that feels and recognises, and the object, that projects itself.

3.1.3. The Five Aggregates Theory (五蘊說, *pancopadana skandha*)

In the previous section we considered the fundamental elements constituting the material world that does not account for mental phenomena in the world. In this section, through looking at how Buddhists understand humanity, we will examine the early Buddhist explanation of the mental aspects of human beings and the physical aspects of the cosmos.

³³¹ Seokwang, *Hanyeong Bulkyo Sajeon* (한영불교사전, *The Korean-English Buddhist Dictionary*), (Seoul: Bulkwang Chulpanbu, 2002), 290.

³³² See Edward J. Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*, 3d ed., (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1949).

The early Buddhists understood humanity through the concept of ‘the Five Groups Theory (五蘊說, *pancopadana-skandha*)’. While examining an individual, they realised that human being has five characteristics such as five aggregates: 1. Form, substance, or matter (色蘊, *rūpa*), 2. Feelings or sensations (受蘊, *vedanā*), 3. Perception or discrimination (想蘊, *saṃjñā*), 4. Will or action (行蘊, *samskāra*), and 5. Consciousness (識蘊, *viññāna*).³³³ The primary elements as the fundamental factors constitute various substances, but the aggregated materials show five different characteristics. In other words, compounded substances have not only physical shapes but also mental forms. The mental phenomena are different according to the degree of complexity of the combination of the primary elements. The five aggregates theory introduces the mental phenomena such as feeling, thinking, acting, recognising. In this view, human beings are the aggregated substances having physical forms as well as spiritual beings having mental phenomena. These two different characteristics are understood as which humans are an inseparable psycho-physical organism in Buddhism. Buddhists do not understand the body and the mind of humanity in a dualistic term, because it is understood that they derive from an inseparable complex which is combined.³³⁴

All existences are categorised in these five aggregates. It is conceived that everything reveals different natures according to the degree of presence of the five aggregates. Humanity is conceived as the highest mode of existence because the five aggregates fully and highly function in humanity. This theory indicates that everything is a complex which consists of five aggregates, and nothing exists separately or independently. After all, the five aggregates identify the natural characteristics of all existences which all things reveal by the degree of aggregation of them.

When the five aggregates come together, they form a certain entity. However, when the five aggregates disintegrate, there is no substance, person, or self. Each part of the five

³³³ *Samyuktāgama* (잡아함권), collection of 3. See Lynn A. De Silva, *The Problem of The Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), 20.

³³⁴ See Lynn A. De Silva, *The Problem of The Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, 17.

aggregates is also understood as a virtual image, because it is also combined by the primary elements. Each aggregate derives from the fundamental source which is also combined. It says that “Form is like a lump of bubbles, feeling is like a bubble, perception is like a mirage, will is like a stem of banana, and consciousness is like a phantom.”³³⁵ That is, humanity as well as other existences are ultimately virtual images, because they are made up of the five aggregates which consist of the primary elements. This understanding of humanity consequently leads to the concept of ‘*Muaa* (無我, selflessness, *anātman*)’, which is one of the significant concepts in Buddhism.³³⁶

The theory of the five aggregates is one of the most significant Buddhist doctrines throughout the history of Buddhism, because the concept of ‘selflessness’ is the remedy for ‘Suffering (苦)’. According to Buddha, all kinds of suffering are caused by desire, and desire derives from the thinking ‘I exist’.³³⁷ If there is not a fixed-substantial self, the origin of suffering disappears. Therefore, analysing the five aggregates one by one, all existences and particularly human being in the cosmos are selfless.

It is conceived that humanity has been only formed by the physical element of body and the mental element of feeling, perception, will and consciousness. Humans recognise objects through their sense faculties, and mental phenomena like feeling, will, and consciousness through mental processing.³³⁸ As a result, humanity only reacts in this way without any spiritual presence. Therefore, it is fair to say that Buddhism is firmly atheist. Early Buddhism denied any existence of God or supernatural power, this idea was put forward against Brahmanism’s fatalism.³³⁹

In brief, all existences including the physical and mental phenomena are ontologically

³³⁵ The Buddhist Text Editing Committee, *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 99

³³⁶ Ibid., 98-9.

³³⁷ Ibid., 99.

³³⁸ *Samyuttanikāya* (잡아함), 273, 305

³³⁹ Pomnyun, *Ingan Buddha Geu Widaehan Sarm kwa Sasang* (인간 본다 그 위대한 삶과 사상, Human Buddha: The Great Life and Thought), (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1990), 34-7.

virtual images, which are ultimately nothing, because they are formed by combined materials as complex. Everything consist of 1 or more aggregates therefore we talk about things as compounds of aggregates and the aggregates come together then part and the something becomes nothing. The perceptions, we can feel through sensory organs, are also virtual images, because they only exist temporally through the meeting of sense organs and things. Everything is a blend of the four primary elements and the five aggregates and only those things exist that can be sensed (the twelve sense-mediums theory). Consequently, all realities are nothing but entities that join up or part. Therefore, it is natural to deny fatalism or teleology caused by super natural power or any god, and Buddhists understands that the cosmos continuously transmigrates by the endless relationships according to condition, cause, and result without any interference of a supernatural power or god.

3.2. The Process of Change

Pomnyun divides all existences of the universe into three categories: inanimate and animate things and mind. These three phenomena go through the process of change. Inanimate things are affected by the process of '*Seong-Joo-Goi-Gong* (成住壞空, originating-staying-collapsing-emptying)', animate things by '*Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死, birth-ageing-sickening-death)', and the mind by '*Saeng-Joo-Lee-Byeol* (生住移滅, appearing-staying-changing-disappearing)'.³⁴⁰ Pomnyun says that the cosmos is continuously and endlessly changing, and there is no eternal form. Therefore, ontologically speaking, everything is '*Musang*(無常, the formless)'.³⁴¹

3.2.1. *Seong-Joo-Goi-Gong* (成住壞空, Originating-Staying-Collapsing-Emptying)

The Buddhist perspective of the cosmos is, Pomnyun says, understood as the process of

³⁴⁰ Pomnyun, "Bulkyosasang esoeu Saengmyeongmunjae wa Segyekwan (불교사상에서의 생명문제와 세계관, The Matter of Life and Cosmology in the Thought of Buddhism), by the Korea Buddhist Environmental Institution, *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunje* (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Thought and Environmental Concern), (Seoul: Mosaek, 1996), 132.

³⁴¹ The Buddhist Text Editing Committee, *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 102.

Seong-Joo-Goi-Gong (成住壞空, originating-staying-collapsing-emptying).³⁴² *Seong* (成, originating or making) means that the cosmos originated or formed by cause, effect, and condition. It means that the formation of the cosmos is the result of an indescribable period by the combining process, and is still forming in this process. The cosmos is originated by conditions which already described in the four primary elements theory and the five aggregates theory.³⁴³ In the second stage called *Joo* (住, staying or living), the inanimate things grow, develop, and expand. The length of the period and the degree of the change depends on conditions of aggregates. In the third stage (*Goi* (壞, scattering or collapsing) the inanimate things scatter, collapse, and contract. Finally, they reach the stage of '*Gong* (空, emptying)': they return to the state of emptiness or formlessness. All things of the cosmos are always in this process of change, although the degree and length of it is different according to the conditions of the combination.³⁴⁴

Since there is no fixed form in the cosmos humans' interest should not be tied to temporal forms, because these forms are not the original reality. Pomnyun opposes the tendency of humans' thinking that each reality is real, separated, and independent.³⁴⁵ There is no birth and death but change, and the stages of *Seong* (성, originating), *Joo* (주, staying), *Goi* (괴, scattering), and *Gong* (공, emptying) are only temporal, limited, but the continuous change, which leads the circulation, is eternal. Pomnyun calls this continuous change 'relationship'.³⁴⁶

3.2.2. *Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死, Birth-Ageing-Sickenening-Death)

Animate things go through the process called '*Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死, birth-ageing-sickenening-death)' directed and designed by a gene, which is also a compound.

All the cells of the human body are replaced within six months. If the present body is me, after six months I would become a different person. It is not the skeleton and the flesh that

³⁴² Pomnyun, *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunje* (Eastern Thought and Environmental Concern), 132.

³⁴³ Ibid., 134.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 135.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 136.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 138.

sustain our body, but a gene, which is the design of the body. The design is revealed as ‘*Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死, birth-ageing-sickening-death)’. The existence of body as originating by the design becomes ‘*Saeng* (生, birth)’, and maintains and replaces itself until it ends its own process ‘*Ro-Byeong* (老病, aging and sickening)’. Finally, it finishes its own life as dismantling ‘*Sa* (死, death)’. The life of our body has been already decided by the design, and the design determines the transforming time of the body. The body is certainly goes through ‘*Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死, birth-ageing-sickening-death)’ though there is short life or long life in the human sense of time, and ‘*Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死, birth-ageing-sickening-death)’ is an unavoidable process.³⁴⁷

Therefore, the body as a form is not eternal but temporal, and the relationship, which is the process of ‘*Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死)’, is considered and emphasised as the actual reality by Pomnyun. Therefore, the body is not so significant, rather the relationship, which causes to form the body is always considered as the vital point of human life.

3.2.3. *Saeng-Joo-Lee-Myeol* (生住移滅, Appearing-Staying-Moving-Disappearing)

Through the theory of the five aggregates, it has been already examined how the early Buddhists understood the mental phenomena or the positive will. It was believed that the mental activity, which cannot be explained by the natural order of the physical world, is the final step of the evolution of the cosmos. That is, the physical and life phenomena were developed or evolved into the mental phenomena. There was a qualitative change from the state of the complicated multi-organic cells organised by a gene to the mental phenomenon. It is conceived that the unique nature of the mental phenomenon was not designed by a gene but originated from the process of complicated combination.³⁴⁸

The mental phenomena also has the process of ‘*Saeng-Joo-Lee-Myeol* (生住移滅, appearing-staying-moving-disappearing)’.³⁴⁹ The mind always moves to another stage whenever information comes in which reveals its impermanent nature. Pomnyun claims

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 143.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 144.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 144.

that this mental process is led by '*Hakseup* (學習, learning and experiencing)' the same way the gene determines the changes in the body.

All phenomena of life start from the design of gene, and nothing can change the course of the process. However, the mental phenomena start from '*Hakseup* (學習, learning or experiencing)'. What is '*Hakseup* (學習)'? For example, it is the gene that decides that a bird flies in the sky and a snake crawls on the ground, but there is an area, which could not be covered by the genetic sphere, and this area is filled by the sphere of '*Hakseup* (學習)'. The sphere of '*Hakseup* (學習)' compared to the sphere of gene increases or decreases according to the degree of evolution... Almost all human behaviour is decided by '*Hakseup* (學習)', and '*Hakseup* (學習)' becomes the starting point of the mental world... '*Hakseup* (學習)' is to receive information from various sources.³⁵⁰

The continuous stream of information develops the mental world, and leads to the process of '*Saeng-Joo-Lee-Myeol* (生住移滅, appearing-staying-moving-disappearing)'. The length of the mental process depends on the quality and the quantity of information, and the mental world continues to change in the stream of information. In this view, mind is not fixed too. Here the mental process includes emotion, thinking, will, etc., in the all activities of mind. The mental world is changeable as is the physical world, and there is no a fixed mind in Buddhist understanding.

In conclusion, Pomnyun claims that all things originate in the process of change, which is a relationship. Inanimate and animate objects, and mind are the results of change, they have been connected together in the process of change. The human experience of waking, sleeping, eating, crying, loving, hating, or dying highlights the flow of change, and humanity itself is the flow of change together with the physical, other organic entities, and the mental phenomena. Existing things are compounds of material, organic, or mental phenomena and are going through the continuous flow of change. Life is the union of material, organic, and mind combination as the flow of change according to Pomnyun.³⁵¹ The whole existence of the cosmos becomes one life in the light of change.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 145-6.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 148-9.

From a Buddhist point of view the flow of change constituting a lifetime is exemplary of the very nature of reality. Reality itself is more like a verb than a noun, implying an ongoing process. In this respect, Pomnyun quotes ‘everything changes, but the truth that everything changes does not change’.³⁵²

3.3. The Nature of the Cosmos [The Three Dharma Seals (三法印, *trilakshana dharma mudra*)]

In the previous two sections, we examined Pomnyun’s epistemological understanding of the origin of the cosmos, and the changing of the cosmos, as an endless process. This section will survey the fundamental nature of the cosmos, because the understanding of the fundamental nature of all existences orients human’s behaviour, and defines the relationship between humanity and other existences. Pomnyun’s understanding of nature is clearly expressed in his explanation of ‘The Three Dharma Seals (三法印, *trilakshana dharma mudra*)’, which is one of the most significant doctrines in Buddhism.

‘The Three Dharma Seals’ also called the ‘Three Marks of Existence’ is revealed as follows: ‘*Saek*(色, material)’ is formless, formless is suffering, and suffering is selfless. ‘*Su*(受, Sensations)’, ‘*Sang*(想, perceptions)’, ‘*Haeng*(行, will)’, and ‘*Sik*(識, consciousness)’ are also the same as this.³⁵³

In other words, all things such as materials, organic compounds, and mental phenomena have these three characteristics: formlessness as the mode of change, selflessness as the mode of being, suffering as the mode of state. These three characteristics are the fundamental natures of all things in the universe. These principles became the basic understanding of Buddhists’ cosmology, and they have been renowned as one of the most typical Buddhist thoughts.

3.3.1. The Formlessness of All Things (諸行無常, *sarva samskāra anitya*)

According to the Buddhist’s eye, the cosmos is, firstly, formless. The term ‘formlessness

³⁵² Pomnyun, *Banyasimkyeong lyagi* (The Story of the Heart Sutra), 121.

³⁵³ *Samyuttanikāya* (잡아함), 1.

(無常)'is frequently used by Buddhism referring to the true nature of the cosmos(or life). It indicates the impermanence of all existences as they rise, move, and fall until the cosmos reaches non-existence after having come to be.³⁵⁴ That is, all things are formless (無常), because nothing is consistent but change. From the beginning to the end of all things, there is no original and permanent form, but only a contemporary form created by the combining and disintegrating of material. From a huge planet to a very small stone, all things continuously evolve, develop, and become extinct in the circle of change.³⁵⁵

This teaching about the formlessness of the cosmos indicates that to be bound by the external and visible world is meaningless, because it is temporal and all things soon change. Buddha says that the four primary elements such as water, earth, fire, and air, which are understood as the substantial origin of the physical world, are also formless, because they are not unchangeable, rather their change is controlled by a formless source known as 'Yeonki (緣起, the Dependent Origination)' being presented as cause, conditions, and effect.³⁵⁶ Therefore, ideas of modern Physics such as the uncertainty principle are recognised as tools to prove this view, and they have been frequently used by Buddhists.³⁵⁷

The world has no real shape or form, because it continuously changes by causes, conditions, and effects. Formlessness of the cosmos does not mean that nothing exists, but that there is no real form in the cosmos. Therefore, human's happiness or sorrow depending on this formless reality is in vain, and Buddhist's teaching asks to cut off all kinds of the worldly life's connections.

3.3.2. The Suffering of All Things (一切皆苦, *duhkha*)

Buddhism sees that all phenomena of all human's unsatisfaction, misery, and suffering

³⁵⁴ The Buddhist Text Editing Committee, *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 102.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ *Samyuttanikāya* (잡아함), PTS edition, 56, II, 5 V, 335.

³⁵⁷ The Buddhist Text Editing Committee by Weon-cheol Yun, Bong-chun Lee, etc., *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 358-71.

derive from the attachment to formless things which are not eternal and original. Therefore, Buddha's primary concern was to release the self from suffering through the knowledge of the cause of suffering which leads to the cessation of suffering and to achieve liberation through the elimination of the attachment.³⁵⁸

This, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering (*duhkha*): Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; grief, lamentation, pain, affliction and despair are suffering; to be united with what is unloved, to be separated from what is loved is suffering; not to obtain what one longs for is suffering; in short, the Five Groups of Grasping are suffering.³⁵⁹

These sufferings are divided into three categories: '*Gogo*(苦苦, suffering of the sense)' which comes from the physical and the mental phenomena due to pain, '*Haenggo*(行苦, suffering of impermanence' and '*Guigo*(壞苦, suffering of disintegration'.³⁶⁰ One of the fundamental purposes of Buddhism is to overcome '*Go*(苦, suffering, *duhkha*)', because Buddha sees that 'all things are formless, and formlessness is suffering'.³⁶¹

Not the cosmos but human beings suffer as they try to hold onto tangible things which are in actuality fleeting and virtual images. One can overcome suffering if he or she is able to get rid of their desire to cling to a tangible reality, through an awakening to reality as formlessness, endlessly changing according to cause, condition, and effect.

In this view, it is fair to say that the Buddhist conception of human life is pessimistic. Happiness is temporal and superficial in reality, and the fundamental nature of human life is mainly suffering and misery. It is similar to the state of sin in Christianity, in which suffering is caused by sin whereas Buddhism says suffering is caused by

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 89-95.

³⁵⁹ *Samyuttanikāya* (잡아함), PTS edition, 56, II, 5 V, 421. According to this text there are the eight kinds of suffering: suffering of birth, suffering of ageing, suffering of illness, suffering of death, suffering of association with an unwanted person, suffering of having to face what we hate, suffering of separating from loved ones, suffering of not getting what one wants, and suffering caused by the five aggregates and of clinging.

³⁶⁰ H. Wolfgang Schumann, *Buddhism: An Outline of its Teaching and Schools*, (London: Rider and Company, 1973), 41.

³⁶¹ *Samyuttanikāya*(잡아함), 1

attachment. Buddhists call the state of attachment ‘*Mumyeong*(無明, unenlightenment or ignorance, *avidyā*)’ that the suffering-ridden nature of existence is ignorant. Therefore, Buddha says ‘Liberation(解脫, *vimukti*)’ is the extinction of all illusions and passion.

In brief, suffering originates in the formlessness of the cosmos. The cosmos in the flow of change naturally progresses by its causes, conditions, and effects(인연과). It means that any effort of humanity to possess something in this insubstantial reality attempts to obstruct the natural course, and inevitably results in suffering. All things that have been named and defined are meaningless and consequently remain the cause of suffering for human beings. Therefore, in order to get rid of suffering one must remove any fixed perception of reality, and must be free from any desire or attachment.

3.3.3. The Selflessness of All Things (一切無我, *anatta*)

The doctrine of ‘selflessness (or no-self, *anatta*)’ is one of the most central ideas of Buddhism. This doctrine was the subject of Buddha’s second sermon.³⁶² The ‘self(*atman*)’³⁶³ means a substance or a noumenon which indicates a fixed and eternal existence related to ‘an eternal self(我, *atman*)’ or ‘an eternal god(梵, *Brahman*).’³⁶⁴ The doctrine of no-self says that there is no permanent or independent self in the cosmos, which means the denial of the existence of self as a fixed self in the physical and psychological realm, and of an eternal or ultimate self which might be the source of existence.

Pomnyun believes that there is no a definable continuous self, because human beings, such as everything else in the cosmos, continuously change both physically and mentally. Human beings are described in a sequence of change. Their body has the process of Birth-Aging-Sickenning-Death and their mind has the process of Appearing-

³⁶² Lynn A. De Silva, *The Problem of The Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, 11.

³⁶³ Upanishad believes that the Self (*atman*) which is free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the Real-He should be searched out, Him one should desire to understand. He obtains all worlds and all desires who has found out and who understands that Self.(Chāndogya Upanishad, 8.7.1.).

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 11-2; 17.

Staying-Moving-Disappearing. The elements of the sequence occur according to cause, condition and effect. Everything also has the same process of change, and therefore nothing has a fixed form. In this respect, there is no distinction between humanity and nature ontologically.

In the understanding of the self, the recognisable self only exists at one point of time and space, and cannot exist permanently.³⁶⁵ In this respect, to rely on a fixed self means that people generally cling to this fiction at the expense of their own well being which leads to suffering. This doctrine of no-self plays the role of preventing the cause of suffering by denying an illusory self. There is no such substantial or permanent self, which is able to build or fill oneself with an identity, but only a temporal self, changing in the realm of causes, conditions, and effects. This no-self teaching emphasises that we are not in control of reality, as we otherwise might like to think.

Jay B. McDaniel in his discussion about the Buddhist understanding of the self argues that the true self is 'one's immediate experience' as, for example, we can see in a story of a Zen Buddhist monk. According to him, an immediate experience itself structures volition as well as awareness from within its own perfective depths, and we are the act of self-structuring. The objects, we experience, actually join into our very constitution, forming its objective content whether we are consciously or subconsciously aware of that.³⁶⁶ Therefore, it is possible to understand the sentence "the rocks, the river, everything he could see, all this was his true self".³⁶⁷ This view helps to understand that the self is not a fixed 'being' but a changing 'action', in the union of the subject and object. Self as 'being' is selflessness, but self as 'acting' is change, experience, or relation. Self in the concept of 'being' is empty, but self in the concept of 'acting' is full. Selflessness ontologically means formless but epistemologically implies unlimited and

³⁶⁵ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Whankyeonyunli*(불교와 환경윤리, Buddhism and Environmental Ethic), (Jeongto Chulpan: Seoul, 1998). 15-9.

³⁶⁶ Jay B. MaDaniel, "Revisioning God and the Self: Lessons from Buddhism", *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology*, edited by Charles Birch, William Eakin, Jay B. MaDaniel, (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 239-41.

³⁶⁷ Anne Bancroft, *Zen: Direct Pointing to Reality*, (Thames and Hudson: New York, 1979), 29.

ultimate change.

Secondly, the teaching of selflessness also indicates that there is no such thing as a god, soul, or spirit which controls or rules over everything else. There is nothing eternal and absolute. Early Buddhism raised the concept of selflessness against the fatalism of Brahmanism which depends on *Brahma* (god), and against the concept of *atman* (a real self) which everything internally contains an element of *Brahma* as the essence of oneself at the time of Buddha.³⁶⁸ Buddha realised that to believe that the origin of the cosmos or the essence of human being is *Brahma* or any supernatural power, is wrong and meaningless. Instead he taught that the essence or principle of reality is not an ultimate power. He realised that everything is continuously changing by the internal connection of cause, condition, and effect, and there is nothing else. Above all, the self, that is led by any outside power and based on a fixed or eternal reality, does not exist. This view explains why Buddhism is atheist.

However, there seem to be a couple of questions to be answered: how can good and evil be understood? Is there an ethical subject in the concept of selflessness? In fact, early Buddhism does not seem to clearly define the concepts of good and evil, though there are various related teachings. Rather, it is fair to say that there was no attempt to make an exact distinction between good and evil, because the judgement of good and evil was based on the casual action and the resulting effects (因果應報, *karma*)³⁶⁹. That is, there are three types of *karmic* action: negative or non-virtuous actions that produce suffering and pain, positive or virtuous actions that lead to joy and happiness, and neutral actions (neither virtuous nor non-virtuous actions) that lead to experience of equanimity or neutral feelings.³⁷⁰ This approach makes it very difficult to establish an absolute

³⁶⁸ See Pomnyun, *Ingan Buddha Gui widaehan salm kwa Sasang* (Human Buddha His Great Life and Thought), (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1990), 21-38; The Buddhist Text Editing Committee, *The Understanding of Buddhist Thought*, 30-58.

³⁶⁹ The law of karma governing the movement of beings between rebirths, is the principle that beings are reborn according to the nature and quality of their past actions, and they are 'heirs' of their actions. The law of karma is seen as a natural law inherent in the nature of things. See Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990), 39.

³⁷⁰ Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, 39-44.

criterion for good and evil. There are ten good deeds according to body, language and will, and ten evil deeds which are the opposite of the good deeds.³⁷¹ Something, which consequently causes suffering such as the attachment and the seeking of possession of the formless world, which is called ‘*Mumyeong* (無明, unenlightenment, *avidyā*)’, is evil. Something, which provides happiness such as the awakening to selflessness, is good and it is called ‘*Haetal*(解脫, liberation, *vimukti*)’ which means the Path or the extinction of passion or desire.³⁷² All deeds, which derive from the ignorance of formlessness, suffering, and selflessness of the cosmos, such as greediness, hatred, and delusion, are consequently evil, and the opposite deeds, which cut this ignorance, are good. The realisation of the true natures of the cosmos and the awakening to the path are, therefore, indispensable elements of the distinction of good and evil.

The second question is how the subject (self) of ethics is understood if there is no self in the teaching of selflessness? Buddhism denies a substantial self as a fixed permanent subject, but does not deny an acting or willing subject. The anthology of statements of Buddha’s teaching (法句經, *Dharmapāda*)³⁷³, claims that “A committed evil deed by oneself derived from the self, and the self did commit” (161), and “Oneself is the master of the self, there is no other master. By controlling themselves people can gain the completed masterhood” (160). In addition, “People themselves committed evil things, and were spoiled by themselves. If they are not committed to evil by themselves, people become clean by themselves” (165). This statement shows that the self exists as an acting and willing entity which is able to determine its action and will, thus it can become an ethical subject.

In sum, Pomnyun’s basis of cosmology is the theories of the four primary elements, the twelve sense-mediums, and the five aggregates that were the early Buddhist teachings. These theories show that everything is complex, and fundamentally nothing insofar as things are not made of unique materials, but of the combination of the four primary

³⁷¹ See Pomnyun, *Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (Practical Buddhist Thought), 113-143.

³⁷² Lynn A. De Silva, *The Problem of The Self in Buddhism and Christianity*, 63.

³⁷³ There are 426 verses on the basics of Buddhist teaching in the *Dharmapāda*.

elements. This aggregated existence reveals the inanimate, organic, and mental phenomenon in the process of change. The process of change that generates, moves, transforms, disappears, etc., makes things. The each characteristic of all things is decided by the degree of combination by change. Therefore, the original nature of the universe is formless, suffering, and selfless. ‘Change’ or ‘relationship’ that generates compound forms or substances is the most essential factor, and consists of cause, condition, and effect (인연과) which is called ‘the Dependent Origination (연기)’. In this respect, everything that exists is an outcome of causes, conditions, and effects. Pomnyun consequently shows that the true or correct relationships between human being and human being, and human being and other existences could be accomplished through the realisation of this cosmology.

4. Pomnyun’s Exposition of the Relationship between Humanity and Nature

In the previous section we examined the Buddhist perspective on the cosmos in order to understand the original nature of all existences. Pomnyun as a Buddhist monk has firmly upheld this cosmology, and expressed his ecological theologies through its principles. In this section we are going to focus on Pomnyun’s understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality, humanity and nature, which features in three themes: the doctrine of Dependent Origination, one whole life community, and the Middle Path.

4.1. The Doctrine of Dependent Origination (緣起論, *pratītya-samutpāda*)

In this section we will examine the ecological aspects of the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, because it is at the core of Pomnyun’s ecological theology. Buddhism denies the following three assumptions concerning the origin of the cosmos: the cosmos originated by itself, God created the cosmos, and the cosmos itself existed from the beginning. Rather they insist that the cosmos originated in the relationship of causes, conditions, and effects and does not have a beginning or an end. This relationship in

Buddhism is called as ‘The doctrine of Dependent Origination (緣起論, *pratītya-samutpāda*)’.³⁷⁴ The term ‘*pratītya-samutpāda*’ in Sanskrit is literally translated as ‘originating by a cause of something or originating because of something’.³⁷⁵ Origination is dependent on cause, effect and condition.

Because this exists, that exists (此有故彼有); because this arises, that arises (此起故彼起); because this is absent, that is absent (此無故彼無); and because this disappears, that disappears (此滅故彼滅).³⁷⁶

The doctrine of the Dependent Origination goes beyond a mere principle of cause and effect, emphasising the mutual dependent relationship of all things. That is, all things exist, change, and disappear in the interconnected relationship, and there is nothing to be by chance or to be alone. All things arise or disappear by various causes or conditions, and all things become causes or conditions for each other. Everything is relative and dependent in time and space, and things continuously become a cause or condition in this interconnected relationship. Francis H. Cook defines it as ‘mutual identity’ and ‘mutual causality’.³⁷⁷ The interconnected relationship of all things does not mean that co-relation or co-existence by cooperation of individual existences is optional. Rather it has a deep sense of ontological approach to all existences as relational beings. In other words, everything cannot fundamentally exist without other existences or conditions. All existences as the aggregated ones are originated, changed and extinguished by other existences and conditions in their interrelatedness.³⁷⁸ There is no eternal or absolute individual existence but only the interconnected relationship by the Dependent Origination.

The meaning of Dependent Origination is the changing of all existences in interrelatedness,

³⁷⁴ The Buddhist Text Editing Committee by Weon-cheol Yun, Bong-chun Lee, etc., *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 29.

³⁷⁵ Ibid. 75.

³⁷⁶ *Samyuttanikāya* (잡아함), 335.

³⁷⁷ Francis H. Cook, “The Jewel Net of India,” in J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, eds., *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 214.

³⁷⁸ Pomnyun, *Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (Practical Buddhist Thought), 52-3.

and it is the real feature of the world. That is, interrelatedness and change is the core of the teaching of Dependent Origination. In the view of Dependent Origination, all things are conceived as 'interrelated structure of mutual dependence' or 'endless process of change'. Dependent Origination, therefore, is a cosmology recognising 'formlessness' in the concept of time and 'selflessness' in the concept of space. Formlessness is a truth because there is no real substance in the world, and selflessness is a truth because nothing can maintain a fixed self-identity.³⁷⁹

The Dependent Origination does not derive from anything but exists originally without a beginning and an end. While other religions claim that the ultimate reality is a god or gods that created the universe, Buddhism insists that 'The Dependent Origination (緣起, *pratītya-samutpāda*)' is the real, original, and ultimate reality. The doctrine of Dependent Origination is similar to the concept of 'the divine providence' in Christianity insofar as it governs all the actions of the cosmos.

Pomnyun claims that the cause of all disputes, troubles, and environmental destruction is anthropocentrism. Other existences were naturally marginalised and ignored in this anthropocentrism, and became mere instruments for human interests. Being ignorant of the mutual relationship between humanity and nature is the fundamental problem of the ecological crisis. All attitudes, which derived from anthropocentrism, reinforce this ignorance, and further separate the individual from their interrelated existences hence they are the main enemy of humanity and nature in the Pomnyun's view. He denounces any exclusive approach regarding human beings, nature, and earth, and considers that all existences have equal status in their inseparable interconnected relationship.³⁸⁰ According to the doctrine of dependent origination, there is no distinction between humanity and nature. Therefore, Pomnyun explains the relationship of all things as follows:

All things are in one and one is in all things (一中一切多中一), one is all things and all things are one (一卽一切多卽一). One small piece of dust accommodates the whole world

³⁷⁹ Pomnyun, *Banyasimkyeong Iyagi* (The Story of the Heart Sutra), 97-8.

³⁸⁰ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (불교와 환경, Buddhism and Environment). (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1998), 47-9.

(一微塵中含十方), all pieces of dust do the same too (一切塵中亦如是). Uncountable time becomes one moment (無量遠劫即一念), one moment becomes uncountable time (一念即時無量劫).³⁸¹

Callicott also proves that to think of the self as a self-enclosed substance or to consider the self by atomistic concepts of the self is ontologically inaccurate, and it leads us to wrongly suppose isolated egos.³⁸² Callicott describes the self as a 'relational self' consisting of physical and psychic parts. Their existence and identity depend on and are related to their environment through the compounds of natural substances and processes, and on an adaptive interaction with the ecological organisation of nature. To think of the self relationally is, therefore, to think that its very existence is affected or constituted by other entities.

According to McDaniel, the self and the outside world are treated equally in the dependent relation, and the world such as rocks, trees, hills, rivers, plants, people, other animals, stars, and galaxies are conceived as 'my body' which is identical to my immediate experience and immanent within my self. He points out that the relation between the self and the world in terms of 'my body' does not imply 'control' or 'self-expression', because all existences that are parts of me become a 'subjective composition' through originating dependently and intrinsically in their own self-structuring ways by the immediate experience. Therefore, he believes that the same amount of respect should be equally given to non-human beings as well as to humanity.³⁸³ However, although this view shows that humanity and nature have the inseparable relationship in the concept of my self by the immediate experience, it may lead to suppose that the outside world is treated from an anthropocentric perspective, and the physical world itself is not considered as a subject that has a intrinsic rights as humanity does.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 46.

³⁸² See J. Baird Callicott, "The Metaphysical Implications of Ecology", *Environmental Ethics* 8, no. 4 (1986), 301-16.

³⁸³ Jay B. MaDaniel, "Revisioning God and the Self: Lessons from Buddhism", *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 247-8.

Through the understanding of the doctrine of dependent origination, Pomnyun does not see humanity and nature as independent or isolated beings, the distinction of humanity and nature are merely the conceptual definition in human thought, and both of them cannot be understood as beings apart from each other in reality. Humanity is nature, and nature is humanity.³⁸⁴ This inclusive relationship is a fundamental ecological principle, and highlights mutual dependence and symbiosis. Humanity and nature are inseparable, interconnected and dependent. Humanity has no higher priority than nature, therefore it is not to exploit nature or seize control over other entities. This view indicates that humanity has no special status unlike in Christianity even though humanity is considered to be at the most advanced level of the evolution.³⁸⁵ Humanity has no privilege to exploit, control, or govern other existences. Buddhist scriptures strongly prohibit all destructive behaviour involving the killing of any living thing as their most significant principle.³⁸⁶ Moreover, Buddhists deny the dualistic understanding of humanity: of matter and spirit, body and soul, or the like; most radically perhaps Descartes' famous dualism of intellectual mind and mechanical body. This outcome of the dualistic approach to anthropology or the self, in the eyes of Buddhists, consequently produces a hierarchical structure in which reason (or mind) has a divine image and is conceived as a true virtue in morality. However, the physical and the mental world are the different phenomena being presented in the process of change in the Buddhist view and there is no hierarchy in the world.

4.2. One Whole Life Community

Relating to the doctrine of Dependent Origination, Pomnyun also acknowledges all existences including human being and non-human beings as 'one whole life community'.³⁸⁷ He hesitates to accept qualitative differences between human beings and

³⁸⁴ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 45-7.

³⁸⁵ Gen. 1:28.

³⁸⁶ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 44. See The Buddhist Text Editing Committee by Weon-cheol Yun, Bong-chun Lee, etc., *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 303-6.

³⁸⁷ Pomnyun, "Bulkyosasang esoeu Saengmyeongmunjae wa Segyekwan (불교사상에서의 생명문제와 세계관, The Matter of Life and Cosmology in the Thought of Buddhism), *Dongyangsasang*

non-human beings, organic matter and non-organic substance, because he sees them as different expressions or forms derived from the Dependent Origination. Physical, organic, and mental forms are phenomena revealed by the degree or complexity of the Dependent Origination, and the cosmos is the assembly of material, organic, and mental phenomena. Pomnyun demonstrates that material phenomenon evolves into organic phenomenon, which evolves into mental phenomenon through a much more complicated process of dependent interrelatedness. Pomnyun speaks of these as ‘one total life phenomenon’.³⁸⁸ In other words, the flow of change is ‘life’, and all existences including organic and non-organic substances, or human being and non-human being constitutes ‘one whole life community’. Pomnyun claims that ‘human being’ is ‘a total being’ that all phenomena are aggregated, and each phenomenon as a part of the whole constituting human being is also ‘life’.³⁸⁹

Pomnyun’s holistic approach to life prevents him to approve of competition and confrontation, which may lead to the destruction of the relationship of human beings and non-human beings. They are by-products of the individualistic perspective of life stemming from Western tradition.³⁹⁰ Stephen R. L. Clark concludes that the Western tradition, which reflects a world of ‘solid atoms, literally atomic, indivisible, and independent’, makes humans exclude all other existences in the understanding of the self, and makes all its relations ‘extrinsic’, and he insists on a ‘new philosophy’ echoing communion.³⁹¹ Pomnyun through the acknowledgement of this problem warns about the separatedness, and denies the laws of jungle, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest, the influence of Darwinism.³⁹² It means that all things are parts of life in the full scale of life, and coexist in the interdependent relationship. Life is not individual or

kwa Hwankyeongmunje (동양사상과 환경문제, Eastern Thought and Environmental Concern) by the Korean Buddhist Environmental Institution, 148-9.

³⁸⁸ Pomnyun, *Banyasimkyeong Iyagi* (The Story of Heart Sutra), 110-1.

³⁸⁹ Pomnyun, “Bulkyosasang esoeu Saengmyeongmunjae wa Segyekwan (The Matter of Life and Cosmology in the Thought of Buddhism), *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunje* (Eastern Thought and Environmental Concern) by the Korean Buddhist Environmental Institution, 149.

³⁹⁰ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 45.

³⁹¹ Stephen R L Clark, *How to Think about the Earth*, (Mowbray: London, 1993), 74-5.

³⁹² Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 45.

many but whole or one according to Pomnyun. Here the concept of life connotes all phenomena continuously relating to each other, and it cannot simply be cut off one by one from life individually. In this view, there is no distinctive line between life and no-life, because life is the cosmological framework. Moreover, human beings themselves are also members of the cosmic community in the cosmological framework of life.

In fact, this view is similar to Chiha Kim's insofar as change is the expression of life, and to stop the change means to end life. Death, therefore, does not mean the termination of organic substance. There is no way of avoiding the change in reality. Nonetheless, humankind believes there is. Pomnyun believes that suffering originates from this individualistic or fragmentary view of life.³⁹³

Therefore, reality, as Boff expresses, is 'a permanent dance of energy and elements' in a 'vast communitarian chain' that embrace the entire cosmos.³⁹⁴ Reality is a community, in which the whole and its parts possess an integral dynamism, through a continuous reaction to change in one another. It means that these entities including organic and non-organic matters, substance and non-substance have formed one community. Everything is a member of the community, and nothing can be an outsider or stranger in relation to others. In this sense, Rasmussen describes that we, including all natural things, are at 'home', and the earth, in which all things coexists, is 'our own primordial community' and this primordial community is 'a home'.³⁹⁵ Therefore, all kinds of sectarian approaches, claiming of supremacy of human beings, family, nation, or religion or culture, must not be tolerated in the cosmic community as a whole.

In the sense of the one whole life community, Pomnyun argues that the average GNP of the advanced countries is about 600 times more than India's and 100 times more than China's. At the same time the people of the advanced countries, that make up 20% of

³⁹³ Pomnyun, "Bulkyosasang esoei Saengmyeongmunjae wa Segyekwan (The Matter of Life and Cosmology in Buddhist Thought)", *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunjae*, (Eastern Thought and Environmental Problem), (Seoul: Mosaek, 1996), 148-50.

³⁹⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation*, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 36-40.

³⁹⁵ Lary L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), 325-6.

the whole population of the world, consume 82% of the present resources of the earth.³⁹⁶ If the whole population of the earth consumes as much as the people of the advanced countries, the earth would be destroyed soon and people would need more than five planets such as the earth in order to sustain their consumption and survive. The life of the people of the West depends on the very small consumption of the poor countries. It is obvious that the people of the West consciously or unconsciously take the resources from the people of the poor countries as a result of their individualistic perspective that does not consider other people or other generations.³⁹⁷ Pomnyun points out that it is one of the typical symptoms of the pragmatic or individualistic societies who ignore that everything is inevitably connected to each other in one community.³⁹⁸ Pomnyun argues for 'spatial equality' and 'temporal equality'.³⁹⁹ That is, the distribution and the use of resources should be made right. His understanding of equality in the thought of one community means to reject any individual or pragmatic perspective concerning the use of resources. From the concept of the cosmic community naturally emerges 'coexistence' and 'symbioses' rather than 'competition' and 'confrontation'.

In relation to the understanding of one life community, the question of individual freedom arises. In fact, Buddhism does not define the individual as an independent being, rather as an interdependent being or relational being, thus has always been connected to other existences. Therefore, individual freedom must be interdependent freedom or relational freedom as opposed to independent freedom. That is, individual freedom is always estimated in the light of the freedom or right of the community, and it cannot be a priority over the concept of community. Individual rights or freedom is closely related to others in the whole community.⁴⁰⁰ It is fair to say that individual prosperity depends on the prosperity of the community, and individual freedom can rightly operate if it is in line with communal freedom. In this view, Pomnyun also sees

³⁹⁶ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 51-2.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 52.

³⁹⁹ See the web site: <http://www.pomnyun.or.kr>. From an online article entitled, *Environmental concern* (환경문제), dated August 2, 2003.

⁴⁰⁰ Pomnyun, *Banyasimkyeong Iyagi* (The Story of the Heart Sutra), 121-34.

that the freedom or right of other beings is equally significant, and no one has a priority. He argues that the principle of equality cannot be estimated by sensibility, moral or rational capability which are part of the anthropocentric approach, rather it should be tied to the relationship of all things.⁴⁰¹ Therefore, hierarchy is disapproved of in the favour of a horizontal structure. The human moral or ethical capability is measured according to the acknowledgement of the relational self, the consideration of the relationship of all things, and the amount of responsibility toward the whole community. Therefore, 'harmony' and 'balance' are naturally emphasised as the significant ethical values, because as we have already pointed out, the individual as a relational being completely depends on the whole community because they share the same life.

We must not confuse Pomnyun's concept of the one life community with the 'One Earth Community'⁴⁰² constructed by the United Church of Canada as part of the World Council of Churches. The concept of the one earth community is concerned with 'a just international economic order' and was established as a result of the complaints of undeveloped countries claiming that the North (advanced countries) is responsible for the destruction of the environment, after 'The Rio Declaration' by the UN Conference on Environment and Development(UNCED).⁴⁰³ It mainly focuses on economic justice, fair distribution and development that benefits all people. However, Pomnyun's view of one whole life community is more fundamental, because it sees nature and humans as equal. 'One earth community' cares for nature in terms of 'Sustainable Development', but 'one whole life community' emphasises 'Sustainable Life'.

In sum, Pomnyun's understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature is of the inseparable life community that cannot be ignored and violated. Everything is interconnected and becomes one in the vast communitarian chain. The concept of life

⁴⁰¹ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 83-7.

⁴⁰² *One Earth Community: Ethical principles for Environment and Development*, Toronto, United Church of Canada, 1992. The complete text has been published in a booklet, including the principles, explanatory narrative and study guide.

⁴⁰³ The explanation of 'The Rio Declaration' and 'One Earth Community' has been well presented in this article: David G. Hallman, "Ethics and Sustainable Development", *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, by David G. Hallman, ed., (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 264-83.

here is conceived as the cosmic relationship and indicates that everything exists in the same community sharing the same fate. Therefore, everything is as brothers or sisters: members of the one family in the life community and constitutes one cosmic community in a horizontal structure of equality coexisting in harmony and balance.

4.3. The Middle Path (中道, *madyamā-pratipad*)

The teaching of the Middle Path was revealed in Buddha's first address to his first five disciples (monks) after his enlightenment. He was so shocked by the suffering and misery that surrounded him, that he decided to leave every comfort of his life and became an ascetic person practicing severe self discipline, which did not result in peace. He eventually abandoned this extreme lifestyle. Whilst meditating, he became enlightened to the Middle Path of self-restraint. He shared the path to Enlightenment with his first five disciples in *Benares* in Northern India. Buddhists refer to that initial address as 'Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law,' which means that the Buddha had embarked on a journey on behalf of the law of righteousness (*dharma*).⁴⁰⁴ The Buddha said:

Monks, these two extremes ought not to be cultivated by the recluse. What two? Sensual indulgence, which is low, worldly, ignoble, and conducive to harm; and self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, and conducive to harm. By avoiding these two extremes, monks, the *Tathāgata* (a title of Buddha meaning perhaps 'he who has arrived at the truth') has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom which brings about calmness, knowledge, realisation, enlightenment, and to *Nibbāna* (state of release from *Samsara*, the cycle of existence and rebirth). And what, monks, is that Middle Path? It is this Noble Eightfold Path, namely: right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.⁴⁰⁵

Pomnyun applies the teaching of the Middle Path to the relationship between humanity

⁴⁰⁴ F. Max Mueller, ed., *The Sacred Books of the East*, 50 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon, 1879-1910), vol 13, 94-7.

⁴⁰⁵ The Buddhist Text Editing Committee by Weon-cheol Yun, Bong-chun Lee, etc., *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 59-60.

and nature. In his discussion over the solution of ecological crisis, he criticises both arguments: anthropocentric optimism which claims that the crisis can be cured by an advanced scientific technology and naturalistic romanticism according to which nature can cure itself by its power and human beings should do nothing. He points out that the fundamental nature of scientific technology is to exploit the natural world, the limits of the power of nature and the long time necessary for healing. Instead, he suggests a compromise in ecological practice: human power and the power of nature should become allies.⁴⁰⁶ He sees a way of reconciliation between human being and nature through the Middle Path, which is the most appropriate relationship, humanity and nature can achieve.

In Pomnyun's view, the unchangeable truth, which is called 'ultimate reality', 'super-historical or super-natural truth', is that all existences or phenomena of the cosmos form the flow of change by the Dependent Origination in the interdependent relatedness. The Middle Path can be applied in different ways according to the actual circumstances.

Pomnyun says:

The Buddhist denies the formation of ideas as dogmas, because it leads to the loss of vitality of life as persisting in the fixed dogma of Buddhism. Although a super-historical truth has been expressed, it spontaneously involves historical factor. Therefore, to ignore the historical factor or to insist on absoluteness is careless, and called '*Bubjib* (法執, the attachment to dharmas). It needs proper means to express the truth according to various circumstances. The best way to reach the ultimate purpose according to their circumstances is 'the Middle Path'. The Middle Path is the best (or right) way, and it changes according to the circumstance and cannot be fixed. It is not a determined way, but the best way in its own circumstance. Therefore, it is a law, which has no fixed or determined way.⁴⁰⁷

Pomnyun recognises that practice is as important as teaching in Buddhism, and the Middle Path is the way of practice.⁴⁰⁸ '*Culga* (出家)' means entering to homelessness, leaving the worldly ways behind and practicing the new insight or wisdom. Considering

⁴⁰⁶ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 117-121.

⁴⁰⁷ Pomnyun, *Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (Practical Buddhist Thought), 68.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

our individual circumstances, Pomnyun illustrates the significance of the circumstances in the following diagram.⁴⁰⁹

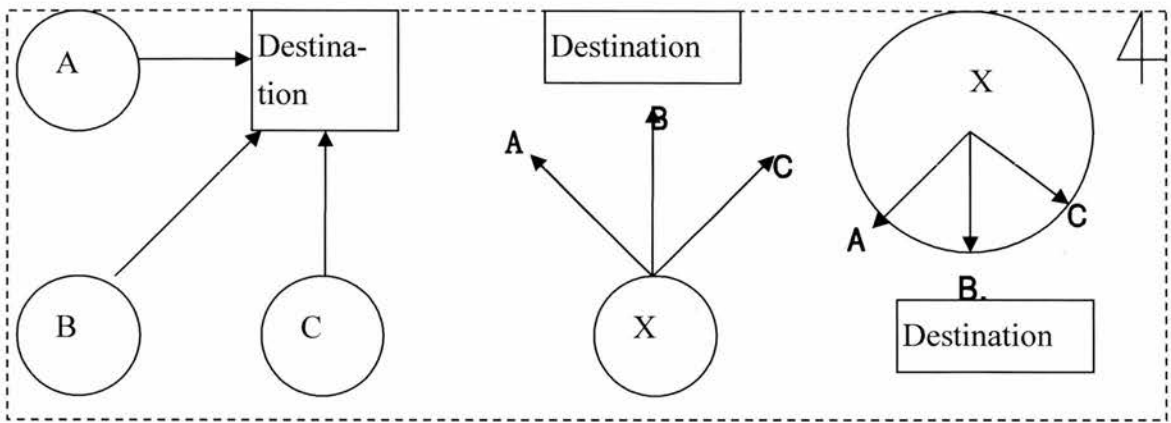


Figure 1

Figure2

Figure3

In figure1, A, B, and c represents 3 individuals who are heading towards the same destination. A is West, B is Southwest and C is South of the destination. It is clear, that they all have to travel different directions in order to arrive to their destination. The second figure shows that individual X, who is going to A, should go to C direction in order to go to B destination. In figure3, X society, which is going to A, should be pushed to direction C for destination B, and if it is going to C, should be pulled to direction A for the destination B. The diagram clearly demonstrates that the circumstances determine the direction one takes towards the chosen destination.⁴¹⁰ In other words, different practices of Buddhism should be taught in accordance with the state of the subject. This principle is also applied to the interpretation of Buddhist scriptures. Pomnyun warns against scriptural literalism because a letter or a doctrine is only a means to understand the true meaning beyond it, which is more significant. He states that ‘you throw away the raft after crossing a river’.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 68-9.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 69-70.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 70.

In applying the principles of the Middle Path, Pomnyun suggests four different alternatives that may tackle the ecological crisis: global view, Korean view, Buddhist view, and individual view. On a global level he points at the consumer lifestyle, ‘mass production and mass consumption’ as products of industrial civilisation and capitalism, the tendency of ignoring life, and the unfair distribution of food and resources, which is ‘globalisation’. These problems have already been studied by many researches.⁴¹² Pomnyun argues for ‘a new human society’ with ‘pure minds, good friends, and clean lands’ achieved through the reconciliation among humans and humanity and nature counteracting industrial civilisation, capitalism, and globalisation.⁴¹³ His vision is a society which champions minimum consumption and joins the lives of all existences together in kinship. In this sense, the concept of the communal interconnectedness seems to be one of Pomnyun’s greatest ideas by way of an alternative suggestion replacing sectarianism and individualism. Regarding the Korean context, Pomnyun points to the westernisation of Korean society by American influence, which rapidly destroys the traditional values of family, life, agriculture, etc., and insists upon ‘a new revolution of consciousness’ through restoring and reinterpreting traditional values for the modern society. In particular, he emphasises the reestablishment of the inseparable relatedness between human beings, and humanity and nature with the help of Buddhism, Taoism, or Confucianism,⁴¹⁴ because these traditions are seen to endeavour to establish the life of balance and harmony between humanity and nature. Thirdly in the Buddhist circle, Pomnyun promotes balance between individual cultivation and social activity. He reflects a trend of individual cultivation of Korean Buddhism, and argues that there is no outside and inside of oneself, and the fruit of individual enlightenment should be shared with others through participating in society. Buddhists, he argues, should be conscious that everything is interconnected without distinguishing between oneself and

⁴¹² Pomnyun, *Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (Practical Buddhist Thought), 67.

⁴¹³ Pomnyun, *Miraemunmyeong ul Ikeulgogal Saeroun Ingansang* (미래문명을 이끌고 갈 새로운 인간상, New Human Vision to Lead the Culture of the Future), (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1998), 5-12.

⁴¹⁴ Pomnyun, “Bulkyosasang eseoui Saengmyeongmunjae wa Segyekwan (The Matter of Life and Cosmology in Buddhist Thought)”, *Dongyangsasang kwa Hwankyeongmunjae*, (Eastern Thought and Environmental Problem), 127-8.

others, you and I, human being and nature.⁴¹⁵ Finally on the individual level, he suggests a new human model wishing to minimise consumption through the realisation that all existences are interdependent beings and related to one another, and everything is an inseparable part of the cosmos and an indivisible member of the cosmic family.⁴¹⁶

The Middle Path has directed us to a practical life in the face of the ecological crisis as we know it today. The lifestyle, through harmony and balance between human beings, and humanity and nature, is the core of the Middle Path. It is the way, which everything can survive and coexist together, and which does not incline toward imbalance. Pomnyun adopted a realistic standpoint that can be easily followed by avoiding extreme tendencies or any centrism and is derived from the equality of all things.

In sum, Pomnyun explains the relationship between ultimate reality, humanity, and nature through the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, the one whole life community, and the Middle Path. The Dependent Origination proves that all existences are constituted by the inseparable interconnectedness. The Dependent Origination has no beginning or end; it is the ultimate reality as God. Everything originates from this eternal and endless connectivity, and exists temporally in the flow of change. Therefore, everything is a member of the cosmic life community (connectivity). Although humanity and nature have different capabilities according to the degree of the complexity of change that is part of their nature, they are not distinguished in terms of quality. Human beings and non-human beings share the one life connectivity as one whole community. In practice, Pomnyun pursues harmony and balance through the concept of the Middle Path recognising the equality of all existences and the application of different circumstances. In brief, the relationship between ultimate reality, humanity, and nature is conceived as an inseparable interconnectedness which is the endless dynamic change caused by the Dependent Origination.

⁴¹⁵ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 36-8.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77-80.

5 The Characteristics of Pomnyun's Ecological theology

In the previous section we analysed Pomnyun's understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality, humanity and nature through the doctrine of Dependent Origination, one whole life community, and the Middle Path, and this analysis proved the inseparable interconnectedness in the process of the endless change. This understanding of the relationship has various implications and applications. Therefore, in this section we will look at the characteristics of his ecological theology: absolute connectivity, egalitarian lifestyle and balanced practice.

5.1. Individual or Ultimate Connectivity

One of the significant characteristics in Pomnyun's ecological theology is the nature of connectivity. All things exist in organic connectedness through the Dependent Origination. He understands that this connectivity does not mean an individual connection but an ultimate, inseparable connectivity.

In the case of individual connection the emphasis is on the individuals and not on the fact that they are relational beings. Therefore, these connections are changeable, separable, and limited according to the intension and characteristics of each individual. The relationship between individuals based on this individualistic connection becomes optional and limited by individual interest. Pomnyun criticises this individualistic relationship and urges us to recognise the organic relationship through the Dependent Origination, which is the fundamental nature of all things.⁴¹⁷

Pomnyun's understanding of the ultimate connectedness has three characteristics: absoluteness, wholeness, and religious integration. Pomnyun understands that true reality is not a being but the interconnectivity in which every existing thing takes part. Therefore, the connectivity is absolute, eternal, and unlimited. Each entity is one point of connectivity, and the existence of everything depends on one other. This connectivity is conceived as the ultimate reality. As mentioned before, Buddhism is an atheistic

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 23-6.

religion, thus Pomnyun's argument excludes any reference to a god. In his view, a theistic perspective on the relationship between human beings and nature leads people to fatalism.⁴¹⁸ As well as that, the theistic view gives the impression or tendency that when people depend on a mystical power, do not react when they meet a problem. Pomnyun believes that escapism, mysticism, and fatalism mainly derive from theism.⁴¹⁹ Denying any supernatural or divine power, instead, he emphasises the organic interconnectedness as the ultimate reality in terms of the fundamental nature of all existences but without supernatural power. This absolute connectivity is the ultimate source of all existences that everything is depending on. It is conceived that this absolute connectivity cannot be changed by any means, and is eternal and unlimited. Cause, effect, and condition are the elements of the interconnectedness, and these elements lead all phenomena of change according to the degree of the connection.⁴²⁰ Pomnyun's analysis of the contemporary ecological problems is from the perspective of absolute interconnectedness. Cause, effect, and condition often become his method of analysis. He recognises that the fundamental cause of all problems and suffering is in reality, and the answer is also in reality, because it is conceived that individualistic tendencies have prevailed in many areas and caused to ignore the unchangeable ultimate interconnectedness. Therefore, he says that the phenomena of nature should be cured through finding the law of nature, contradiction of society should be resolved by readjusting the fundamental structure that is the source of the problem, and individual anxiety in human consciousness should be controlled through emptying the mind. The cause of all problems is the ignorance of the interconnectedness in reality."⁴²¹

Moreover, the concept of the ultimate (or organic) interconnectedness is holistic. This connectivity is not merely the assembly of all individuals but is more than that. This

⁴¹⁸ Pomnyun, *Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (Practical Buddhist Thought), 25-6.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 22-6.

⁴²⁰ Yeongtae Kim, "Bulta wa Jayeon Aeho (불타와 자연 애호, Buddha and Loving Nature)", by Dongkug University Buddhist Culture Institution, *Saeroun Jeongsin Munhwa ui Changjo wa Bulkyo* (새로운 정신문화 창조와 불교, Creation of New Culture and Buddhism), (Seoul: Uri Chulpansa, 1994), 53.

⁴²¹ Pomnyun, *Silcheonjeok Bulkyosasang* (Practical Buddhist Thought), 27.

interconnectedness is not constituted by the individual relationship, but the connectivity itself already exists and individual beings originate in it. Although it is seen that a being exists individually, it is not an individual being but part of the connectivity.

Ontologically, all existences are virtual images that continuously change in the interconnectedness. The universe is the connectivity itself as whole, all existences are equal as part of the interconnectedness. In this sense, destroying the natural world is the same as to destroy oneself. *Beommangkyeong* (梵網經, Sutra of the Net of Brahman)⁴²² says:

All existences are my father and mother, to kill and harm them is to kill and harm my parents, and to kill and harm my old body. All the lands and water are my body, and all warmth and energy of the movement are originally my body.⁴²³

Therefore, Pomnyun says “I in the universe and the universe in me”, and describes it as inseparable existences.⁴²⁴ This holistic understanding of the connectivity refuses all kinds of discriminations by a race, a gender, a class, a nation, and a culture, and emphasises a horizontal relationship.⁴²⁵

Finally, Pomnyun’s understanding of organic interconnectedness applies to religious integration in reality. He recognised the problems of confrontation between religions in Korea. He emphatically asserts the need to address the problems arising from the competitive attitude of religions. He argues that all religions may find commonalities, because religions cannot be separated from the absolute and holistic interconnectedness that indicates coexistence either. He suggests that particularly the ecological movement can be a platform for the reconciliation of religions and religious integration.

Coexistence with others, recognition of differences should be considered very precious

⁴²² *Beommangkyeong* (梵網經, Sutra of the Net of Brahman) is Sutra of Mahayana that contains the basic teaching on discipline and morality.

⁴²³ See Yeonghae yun, “Bulkyo ui Saengmyeong Yihae (불교의 생명 이해, The Buddhist Understanding of Life)”, *Sinhak Sasang*, no. 92, (1996, spring), 79.

⁴²⁴ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyong* (Buddhism and Environment), 15.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 33-4.

things, and to expand on commonalities and to respect differences is the appropriate attitude in seeking peace. Dialogue and peace between religions of Korea are very significant at this level. The contemporary religious environmental movement of Korea is one of the significant mediums through which they can expand on their commonalities, and this solidarity could be the actual basis for solving the ecological problems and peace between religions, and South and North.⁴²⁶

Pomnyun, through his ecological theology, aims at the restoration of the relationship between all existences and the change of one's sense of values and lifestyle, and argues that these matters should be a common agenda within religions.⁴²⁷ He took part in dialogues with other religions. Six of the major religions in Korea such as the Protestant Church, Catholic Church, Buddhism, *Cheondokyo* (천도교), Confucianism, and *Won Buddhism* (원불교) discussed the ecology issue, and the outcome of this dialogue was the 'Religious People's Declaration of Environmental Ethics (환경윤리 종교인 선언)' in 31st May, 1993 promoting four practical ideas:

1. Recognising the riches of the soul and the physical world.
2. Discarding anthropocentrism in favour of the idea of harmony between nature and humans.
3. Regarding holistic worldview instead of giving preference to individual issues.
4. Considering the future generations when making decisions.

These practical applications imply to change human's recognition, which bases on the disconnectivity between the soul and the material, human and nature, individual and the universe, and this generation and the future generation, into the understanding of the organic relations of all existences.⁴²⁸ Pomnyun emphasises that "the era of religious mission and propagation should end, and we should enter the era of participation in social suffering."⁴²⁹ He believes that the participation in social suffering is one of the significant religious responsibilities, and it starts from the organic cosmology which all

⁴²⁶ See the web site: <http://www.pomnyun.or.kr>. From an online article entitled, *Environmental concern* (환경문제), dated August 2, 2003.

⁴²⁷ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 6-9.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

things are organically interconnected.

5.2. Egalitarian Lifestyle

Pomnyun understands that all existences are equal, because everything is part of the endless interconnectedness. He insists on an egalitarian lifestyle that recognises that all existences are as important as humanity.⁴³⁰ Discrimination occurs when a relative comparison is made between humanity. This individualistic lifestyle is the source of all sorts of ecological problems.⁴³¹

On this basis, Pomnyun criticises the mechanistic and individualistic perspective when dealing with ecological matters, because they only focus on the restoration of the destroyed nature. Pursuing problems such as pollution of air and water, the mechanistic view focuses on structural improvement of problems in the society, viewing separately the ecological matters from the lifestyle of humans. Although these efforts produce various regulations that protect nature, however, they do not touch on people's sense of value or world view which causes ecological crisis in the first place.⁴³² For the cause of environmental destruction and the collapse of local community culture, family system, or human personality is the individualistic lifestyle. Therefore, he calls the ecological movement '*Saemyeong Undong* (생명운동, life movement)', and the ultimate purpose of the ecological movement is to return to the egalitarian lifestyle.⁴³³

Pomnyun points out five problems that caused ecological crisis in human consciousness and lifestyle: development theory, anthropocentrism, dualistic thought, the linear view of time, and the centrism of science.⁴³⁴ He criticises development theory because it focused on material and industrial prosperity in the last two or three hundreds years. As a result, environmental destruction was inevitable. Therefore, he insists that this is the

⁴³⁰ Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 83-7.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid., 6.

⁴³³ Ibid., 7.

⁴³⁴ See the web site: <http://www.pomnyun.or.kr>. From an online article entitled, *Environmental concern* (환경문제), dated August 2, 2003.

time for change from the old concepts to a new major approach, which is the reconciliation of humanity and nature. Anthropocentric, white-centred, individualistic view, and dualistic view are also his main enemies, because these views, he believes, are fundamentally responsible for separating human being from human being, and human beings from nature, because they generate ‘competition’, ‘confrontation’, and ‘complication’ between classes, people, countries, man and woman, the first world and the third world, and humanity and nature.⁴³⁵ The linear time view led people to think that every area endlessly develops towards the end of time, which entails the unlimited use of resources to sustain the development. In addition, the belief in the supremacy of science developed straight out of the linear time view allowing for the possibility and impression of unlimited development of science, despising dated science and lifestyle calling them primitive, immature, or uncivilised. Returning to past lifestyles is no longer an option for modern people, and it is almost impossible to return to an environmentally and friendly way of life. Furthermore, the nature of science only accepts a tangible and provable factor as formal truth, and nature has become an instrument for human welfare and interest. Pomnyun calls science a ‘minimum truth (최소진리)’.⁴³⁶ Therefore, the ecological movement must target these five assumptions and promote the ideas of interrelatedness and interdependence as an alternative, and achieve the goal of egalitarianism.

Pomnyun also criticises the argument of the Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development (ESSD)⁴³⁷, because it is a view of an advanced country and is economy centred and only focuses on the coming generations of the West⁴³⁸ Michael Northcott claims that the environmental philosophies advocating the preservation of the environment for human interest and welfare are ‘shallow’, and they cannot offer solid

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ ESSD (Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development), is the term referring to seeking a way of sustainable development between environment and economic development, means to pursuit development of the present in the scope of no harming the future generation. See Pomnyun, *Bulkyo wa Hwankyeong* (Buddhism and Environment), 134.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

protection against the exploitation of nature.⁴³⁹ Various scholars suggested the promotion of a life-centred view on the spatial perspective in which human beings and nature can live together in one house, the earth.⁴⁴⁰ However, there is a difference between Pomnyun's 'life' and the life-centred view. Pomnyun's understanding of life is more inclusive: all natural phenomena as well as organic and inorganic materials belong to it and it refers to 'action' as opposed to 'being'. In this view, change itself, which leads a thing as a being, is life, and life is not the result of being. All natural phenomena in the flow of change including even death or suffering are parts and activities of life. The enemies of life, therefore, are arbitrary interventions, which break the flow of life, attachment to 'illusions (허상들)' and 'selves (아상들)', which are 'formlessness (무상)'. 'No-self' or 'Selflessness' is, therefore, always emphasised in Buddhism, and it is also one of the most significant keys of ecological theology to solve fundamental problems. Above all, Pomnyun's ecological theology points out that the equality of all existences in the interconnected relationship is the key to get rid of all arbitrary discriminations and attachments which are mainly caused by individualism.

5.3. Balanced Practice

Buddhism is traditionally known to be an environmental friendly religion, because Buddhists prohibit the killing of any life and they do not have personal possessions. Buddhist monks carry a stick to warn insects of their presence while walking on the ground, and try to avoid killing unintentionally. They wander from temple to temple in order to practise ascetic life and cultivation. However, Buddhists failed to draw the attention to these aspects of Buddhism in Korea as they rarely feature within the ecological movement. There are two conflicting arguments in present day Korean Buddhism that see the solution for the problems of globalisation, ecological crisis, etc.

⁴³⁹ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Express, 1996), 256. See Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 37.

⁴⁴⁰ Life-centered view as liberating life has been well shown in the report which was composed by fourteen theologians to deliberate to the World Council of Churches(WCC): see Charles Birch, etc., ed., *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology*, 273-90. See also Larry Rasmussen, "Theology of Life and Ecumenical Ethics", in *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, by David G. Hallman, ed., 112-28.

The traditional argument emphasises the cultivation of personality through the role of ‘*Chamseon* (참선, meditation in Zen-Buddhism)’ believing that it is the only way to solve modern problems. Their interest mainly is to maintain the distance from influence outside Buddhism which might cause confusion, and they naturally hesitate to participate in social issues. They mostly stay within the temples, and focus on interpreting ancient scriptures and on their awakening. As a result, they keep a distance from the reality. As the opposite side, some Buddhists insist the methodology of social science and politics for solving the modern problems. Their focus is on the change or revolution of the social and political system and they seek to participate in various social movements. They are mostly young Buddhists, and have led the modernisation of Buddhism, the revolution and the social movement of Korean Buddhism.⁴⁴¹

Pomnyun is on the Middle Path, halfway between traditionalists and the progressives. He denies the distinction between inside and outside of Buddhism. He considers ecological crisis and globalisation the problems of Buddhism, and social participation and activity as part of individual cultivation. He positively contributes to the discussion of education, poverty, environment, unification, etc.⁴⁴² He founded the *Jungto* Society and the Environmental Education Institute of Korean Buddhism and developed various programs related to ecology and peace. Through his organisations in poor countries he built schools, hospitals, and refugee centres. For this reason Pomnyun has been known as one of busiest monks in the circle of Buddhism of South Korea. The general preconception that Buddhism is not interested in worldly matters, has been remedied by Pomnyun’s influence upon the inner and outer circle of Korean Buddhism.

Pomnyun’s practical aspect in his ecological theology meaningfully shows in the understanding of ‘the Middle Path (중도)’. The practical approach in his ecological theology is very flexible and multi-faceted: he is concerned with issues related to the

⁴⁴¹ See Byeongjo Jeong, “Bulkyo Sasangsa (History of Buddhist Thought), by Byeongcho Jeong & Seokho Lee, *Hanguk Jongkyo Sasangsa I* (History of Religious Thought in Korea I), 182-6; Myeongki Cho, ed., *Hanguk Sasang ui Simcheung* (The Depths of Korean Thought), 566-9.

⁴⁴² See his book, ‘*Jeolmeun Buljadeuleul wihan Suhaenglon* (The Principle of Practice for Young Buddhists)’.

environment, peace, and unification.⁴⁴³

The unchangeable truth, in which all existences and phenomena are interdependent beings and interconnected beings internally and externally in the flow of change, is the centre of his ecological theology, but praxis varies according to different circumstances. Practice provides more space to wrestle with the problems of the society. The multi-faceted praxis is revealed in the

Individual religious cultivation and social participation is not different in practice, and always go together. Pomnyun does not draw a distinction between ‘in (안)’ and ‘out (밖)’ of religion, between personal growth and social participation. According to him, the religious experience through personal awakening is completed through social participation, and meditation is naturally accompanied by practice focusing on finding solutions for suffering and problems concerning individuals or the society.⁴⁴⁴ He says that this balanced practice starts from the premise that ‘you’ and ‘I’, ‘the society’ and ‘I’, ‘nature’ and ‘I’ have an inseparable relationship.⁴⁴⁵ Therefore, individual revolution and social reformation is the same thing. It is called ‘oneness(不二)’ or ‘one mind(一心)’.⁴⁴⁶

In sum, the characteristics of Pomnyun’s ecological theology include ultimate connectivity, egalitarian lifestyle, and balanced practice. The connectivity itself as true reality is the prime concept to understand the universe and all existences, and is absolute, endless, and unlimited. All existences originate from this connectivity and are part of it. This connectivity is the endless change, and leads everything to be and act. In this base, Pomnyun’s ecological theology offers the egalitarian lifestyle as an alternative to individualism that causes the ecological crisis. All things (or phenomena) are the different expressions of one eternal connectivity and they have the equal status in this

⁴⁴³ See the web site: <http://www.pomnyun.or.kr>. From an online article entitled, *Environmental concern*(환경문제), dated August 2, 2003.

⁴⁴⁴ See, Pomnyun, *Jeolmeun Buljadeuleul wihan Suhaenglon* (The Principle of Practice for Young Buddhists), 135-75.

⁴⁴⁵ Pomnyun, *Banyasimkyeong Iyagi* (반야심경 이야기), The Story of the Heart Sutra, 57.

⁴⁴⁶ Buddhist Text Editing Committee by Weon-cheol Yun, Bong-chun Lee, etc., *Bulkyosasang ui Yihae* (불교사상의 이해, The Understanding of Buddhist Thought), 342-5.

one connected community. Finally, his ecological theology tries to practice in harmony and balance between individual cultivation and social practice, religion and society, I and others and humanity and nature.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, we examined Pomnyun's ecological theology. First we focused on his personal life in order to understand his personal and Buddhist life which became the background of his ecological theology. Then we explored the cosmology of early Buddhism because Pomnyun's cosmology stems from that and because it affected his ecological theology. The areas covered included the theories of the Four Primary Elements, the Twelve Sense- Mediums, and the Five Aggregates. They show that all existences are compound forms, and nothing has a fixed original form. He proves that the cosmos endlessly changes through the transforming process of the inanimate, animate and mental worlds. He points out that the fundamental nature of the cosmos consists of formlessness, suffering, and selflessness. Everything is part of change and is a virtual image. In this respect, human's attachment to the formless and selfless world causes suffering.

Pomnyun's understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality, humanity, and nature is based on the Doctrine of the Dependent Origination, on the one whole life community and the Middle Path. The Dependent Origination (緣起) explains that all entities of the cosmos are interconnected and interdependent and are part of the endless change through cause, effect and condition. Therefore, there is no fixed, independent existence. Reality is the interconnected relationship and change. The 'compassion of one body (同體慈悲)' is the manifestation of life which practices love and compassion through realising that I and others are not two but one, and that everything belongs to the one whole life community. The entire phenomena themselves are part of one life, and any influence of individualism, fragmentism, sectarianism, and centrism upset one life. Finally, the Middle Path is the meeting place of humanity and nature in practice,

because it implies the unity of all things in practical application.

In practice the egalitarian lifestyle is the ultimate purpose that the humankind should pursue because it is the way to overcome individualism and centrism, which are the chief cause of ecological problems.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE EXPOSITION OF HYUNJU LEE'S ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

1. Introduction

In this chapter, we will turn our attention to Hyunju Lee's ecological theology, because he is one of the influential Korean Christian ecological thinkers and his ecological theology has unique elements in relation to Christianity and the Korean context. As in the previous chapter, first we are going to look at his personal life history, then we will examine his understanding of ultimate reality, human being, and nature, and expose his understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality, human being, and nature, and finally analyse the characteristics his ecological theology. Through this chapter, we will look at how his ecological theology is shaped, particularly in his understanding of the relationship based on Christian perspective. As the other two thinkers, Lee also insists the inseparable relationship of all existences. It will show that his ecological theology is relevant to Korean ecological characteristics in the light of Christianity.

The Methodist minister Hyunju Lee ranks as a significant thinker of the ecological theology. Lee is one of the main lecturers and writers⁴⁴⁷ of the *Gidokyo Hwoangyong Yeondae* (기독교 환경 연대, Korean Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity for the Integrity of Creation),⁴⁴⁸ He freely uses Korean traditions such as Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism etc., in order to explain his understanding of Christianity. He often states that the significant principles of each religion such as *Tao* (道) of Taoism, *Mu* (無, nothingness) of Buddhism, and faith of Christianity are closely related in their meaning,⁴⁴⁹ but his main concern was to explore the right understanding of Christianity in the Korean context. In other words, he built his Christian ideas upon the foundation

⁴⁴⁷ See the home page of the association: <http://www.greenchrist.or.kr>.

⁴⁴⁸ *Gidokyo Hwoangyong Yeondae* (기독교 환경 연대, Korean Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity for the Integrity of Creation) is the largest environmental group among the Protestant Churches. This association is active in both study and practice for the protection of environment.

⁴⁴⁹ See Hyunju Lee, *Gil eseo Juun Saengkagdeul* (길에서 주운 생각들, Thinkings on the Street), (Seoul: Ulrim, 2000); This book has well shown a close relation of various religious principles by interpreting many stories in essay format.

of Korean traditions, and did not insist that Christianity is the only true religion; rather, he claims that all religions are as brothers and sisters, though each religion has a unique position on something that makes them different. He seems to believe that all religions retain a part of the truth somehow.⁴⁵⁰

The Protestant churches in Korea employ the creation theology, the concept of stewardship⁴⁵¹ to protect against problems created by the industrial development and the values of capitalism.⁴⁵² Even though the Protestant church has special concern for nature in theology, their argument does not seem to overcome the view that nature is subordinate as their understanding of salvation focuses on the human soul.⁴⁵³ The tendency to focus on the salvation of humans is dominant in most Korean churches, and nature or creation has been a relatively marginal concern. Nature is merely treated as an object of ‘creation order preservation’ by, of, or for human beings. Furthermore, conservative circles criticised the traditional religions and culture and largely ignored the traditional values laced on nature.⁴⁵⁴ Consequently, Korean Christianity did not properly correspond to the contemporary ecological crisis.

However, there was a stream called as ‘Korean Life Theology’ by Jeongbae Lee, etc. as I mentioned in the chapter one.⁴⁵⁵ Jeongbae Lee drew the attention to ‘Korean Life

⁴⁵⁰ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (젊은 세대를 위한 신학강의 2, Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation), (Seoul: Dasan Geulbang, 1994), 81-2.

⁴⁵¹ See Honam Theological Seminary ed., *Saengtaehak kwa Kidogkyosinhak ui Mirae* (생태학과 기독교 신학의 미래, Ecology and the Future of Christian Theology), (Seoul: Handeul Chupansa, 1999). This book has shown the significance of the creation theology, which emphasises human responsibility for preserving the order of the creation as a steward.

⁴⁵² Myungjin Lim, etc., “Environmental Theology in Reformation”, *Moghwoe wa Shinhak* (목회와 신학, Ministry and Theology), (Seoul: Duranno Seowon), Sep. 1993, 26-117; *Moghwoe wa Shinhak* (목회와 신학, Ministry and Theology) as one of the most influential journals in Korean churches has dealt with environmental theology in a special section by publishing essays by eight environmental scholars.

⁴⁵³ Dongsik Yu, “Kidokyo Sasangsa (History of Christian Thought)”, *Hanguk Jongkyo Sasangsa* (History of Religious Thought in Korea), 310.

⁴⁵⁴ See Dongsik Ryu, “Kidokyo Sasangsa (기독교 사상사, History of Christian Thought)”, *Hanguk Jongkyo Sasangsa II: Yukyo wa Kidokyo* (한국 종교 사상사 II: 유교와 기독교, History of Korean Religious Thought II: Confucianism and Christianity), by Keum, Jangtae, & Ryu, Dongsik, (Seoul: Yonse University Press, 1994).

⁴⁵⁵ Jeongbae Lee, a professor of Christian Ethics in the Korean Methodist Seminary is at work in the research institute of Christian Environmental Association. He published ‘Indigenisation and Life Culture (1991)’, ‘Ecology and Theology (1993)’, ‘Life Theology of Korea’, etc.

Theology' in connection with indigenisation theology.⁴⁵⁶ Jeongbae Lee criticised the western thought and theology for mainly focusing to history in relation to humanity, and failing to notice the spatial characteristics of the universe.⁴⁵⁷ He believed that nature did not become a proper subject in theological discourse by this reason. Therefore, Jeongbae Lee insisted on life theology which creates a space for nature alongside history as a new form of indigenisation theology.⁴⁵⁸ In life theology, Lee emphasised that the experience of God in people's own time and space is the starting point of theology, and the experience of God in connection to time and space is the foundation of theology. It is that the transcendental cognition in the religious and cultural inheritance as well as the immanent experience in the place of revelation becomes the source of theology.⁴⁵⁹ Although it might lead to a subjective tendency as it emphasises particular points, but it provides a balanced theological thinking in relation to history and nature.⁴⁶⁰

In this respect, Hyunju Lee is free to access the religious context (time) related to various religions and the spiritual context (space) related to his communication with things. On this basis, Lee's ecological theology was formed. He has a deep knowledge of other religions including Christianity as well as a mysterious spiritual experience, and his theological and spiritual scope appear extensively in his writings. He has not only translated various scriptures such as 'Walking with Chuang-tzu (장자산책, 1996)', 'Reading of the Diamond Sutra (금강경 읽기, 2001)', 'The *Bhagavadgita* interpreted by M. K. Gandhi (바가바드기타, 2001)' adding his own interpretation, but he has also produced various books of poetry, fiction, animation besides academic papers. Most of his writings reflect his spiritual dimension and practical direction, and his ecological theology is revealed in them, though he did not articulate it directly.

⁴⁵⁶ Jeongbae Lee sees that *Minjung* theology derived from the conflict between the classes of the social system in Korea. *Minjok* theology was mainly produced from the ideological divide between South and North and Indigenisation theology originated from cultural collisions in the reality of Korea.

⁴⁵⁷ See Judith Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1980), 4-7; Jeongbae Lee, *Hangukjeok Saemyeong Sinhak* (한국적 생명신학, Life Theology of Korea), (Seoul: Gamsin Press, 1996), 84.

⁴⁵⁸ Jeongbae Lee, *Hangukjeok Saemyeong Sinhak* (한국적 생명신학, Life Theology of Korea), 81-5.

⁴⁵⁹ Stephen B. Berans, *Models of Cotextual Theology*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 101-2.

⁴⁶⁰ See Jeongbae Lee, *Hangukjeok Saemyeong Sinhak* (한국적 생명신학, Life Theology of Korea), 259-68.

2. The Life of Hyunju Lee

In this section, we will briefly examine Hyunju Lee's personal history, because his ecological theology has been related to his personal background and experience. It will give us an idea of his Christian character and the formation of his thought. His personal life history will be surveyed in this sequence: his early years, personal awakening, youth, ministry, and his interest in other religions.

2.1. Early Years

Hyunju Lee was born to Taesin Yun (윤태신), a peasant's daughter and Yunsang Lee (이윤상) a peasant's son in 1944. When his father, who was a local official, died in 1954, his mother was 36 years old. She subsequently cared for his two brothers and sister, and he, as the second son, had a thoroughly difficult life from the time of his father's death. He spent most of his childhood in a small town.

When he was five years old, he started to go to the local Methodist church after his mother was converted by the beautiful singing of an evangelist. Lee confessed that he remains a Methodist for he first went to a Methodist church.⁴⁶¹ He was one of the lively boys at church, but things turned serious when one day he hit a girl with a snowball so hard, she fell and was unconscious, seemingly dead. Lee was filled with dread and guilt and prayed fervently for her life, should the girl live he vowed, he would never miss church again. The girl recovered and Lee's belief was strengthened and he always attended a church faithfully. At home, Lee did not seem to be so happy, because he was often compared to his elder brother who was considered a genius and was always top of his class. The constant criticism of his mother in relation to his poor capability of responsibility and Mathematics damaged Lee's self-esteem and its impact lasted throughout his childhood into adolescence.⁴⁶²

During the Korean War (1950-1953), his father was separated from the family and his

⁴⁶¹ Hyunju Lee, *Dolabomyeon Baljagugmada Uenchongieotne*, (돌아보면 발자국마다 은총이었네, Whenever I Look Back, There Were Graces on All My Steps), (Seoul: Saenghwal Seongseo, 1995), 16-7.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 27-9.

grandfather was killed. His mother took the children and they fled from place to place as their life was often in danger. Amidst the devastation of war, Lee realised the significance of life and death. This experience helped him later when his father and his brother died, and enabled him to totally depend on God. When the family was reunited, his father had been suffering for a long period from a lung disease, and other members of his family also experienced financial and emotional hardship. His father died in 1954 when Lee was ten years old. Five years later Lee's brother was killed at work while repairing an electrical device. His mother was profoundly affected by the loss; she was not able to do anything for a long time because of the shock. When she received counselling from a woman who had lost all her family during the Korean War, she was able to find peace.⁴⁶³ These experiences all added to a growing strength in Lee's maturity and faith.

Although Lee was indeed an average child, his personal losses and obstacles brought him to think deeply about life and death in relation to his faith.

2.2. Youth

Lee did not perform well at high school; the extensive memorising required did not come easily to him. Only in language classes did he feel really capable. His family's financial hardship forced him to work, and he left school. However, he overheard his mother in prayer asking God for his return to school, thus he did so. After finishing high school, Lee chose to go to the Methodist seminary, because the seminary had no mathematics exam.⁴⁶⁴ Again, financial difficulties made him leave Seminary for some time. As a means of relief, he applied to the department of animation of a literary contest, and he won a prize. After then his name became known as an animation writer. However, when he returned to the seminary, he found it hard to adapt to the seminary, because of his scepticism of theology and pastoral duty, and he was frequently absent. As a result, he was expelled from the seminary during his final year. He joined the army

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 32-52.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 95-7.

in 1965. He, who was a pacifist, was called an idealist by others in Army. In February 1967, he became deeply comatose due to an unknown disease and was in hospital fighting for his life for 25 days. After eight months he was given a medical discharge from the army.

Next, he worked in the Methodist church as a helper of the editor of the Methodist journal, and in 1969 he joined the Methodist seminary again. He finally discovered the joy of studying theology through the works of German scholars such as R. Bultmann, E. Brunner, K. Barth, D. Bonhoeffer, and the American P. Tillich, etc. These writers provided him with great enlightenment, and P. Tillich became a particular influence.⁴⁶⁵ The Methodist seminary is one of the most influential schools in Korea concerning the study of indigenous theology and Gospel and culture.⁴⁶⁶ After graduating, he worked for the monthly Christian journal, *Gidogkyo Sasang* (기독교 사상, Christian Thought), as an editorial staff for four years, enjoying writing and translating. He mainly worked in publishing, at the Christian Academy and Christian Bible Society until 1976. In 1971, he married Yongsuk Jeong, and he has three daughters.

During his youth, his poverty and mental quest of his uncertain future forced him to work. He finally settled down choosing theology and writing after the experience of Army and work.

2.3. Personal Awakening

As a result of the unknown disease with which Lee was hospitalised in 1967, his health recovered slowly, accompanied by depression, deep anxiety and concern for his future. One day, when lying on the hospital lawn reading, Lee experienced a striking situation. He discovered that the reflection of the setting sun glowed on his book and the whole world was bathed in an inescapable sensation of red. Suddenly, from deep within his

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 180-190

⁴⁶⁶ The movement of indigenous theology was mainly lead by Methodist scholars, Byeongheon Choi, Dongsik Yu, Seongbeom Yun, Seonhwan Byeon; see Jeongbae Lee, *Hangukjeok Saemyeong Sinhak* (한국적 생명신학, Life Theology of Korea), (Seoul: Gamsin Press, 1996), 63.

mind, a voice spoke to him, saying, ‘Hyunju Lee! To whom do you truly belong? Why are you so anxious?’. Lee was deeply moved and felt an amazing and delightful relief from the oppression of his anxieties. At that time he recognised the inescapable grace of God, just as the world could not escape from the evening glow. The phrase, ‘To whom do you truly belong?’ became his gospel whenever he faced crisis in his life, or whenever self-reproach overcame him.⁴⁶⁷

In 1980, during the political situation known as ‘Spring of Seoul’,⁴⁶⁸ he preached in a small church on ‘the unity of Korea and the task of the church’. He insisted that the Anti-Communist Law, which considers North Korea an enemy, should be abolished or amended. For this reason, he was arrested. While in prison, he had an experience of meeting Jesus Christ. In the darkness of his prison, he heard a voice speaking to him, ‘Don’t you know me? I have been waiting for you before you came here. You gave me food when I was hungry, you clothed me when I was in need, and you visited me when I was in prison.’ ‘Is it you?’ he replied, ‘Yes, I am, do not worry, do not be distressed, and make yourself at home’. He was deeply touched, and the joy of this experience overwhelmed him.⁴⁶⁹

These mysterious experiences provided him with an opportunity to realise where the essential or intrinsic values are, and he clearly recognised humans’ limitation of coping with fear. Since then, he often had mysterious experiences, which significantly influenced his spirituality. His spirituality has been also revealed in his communication with various things. He described these experiences in many of his books, especially, the book, ‘The Communicating Story with Things (물과 나눈 이야기, 2001)’, is a collection of various experiences. He confesses in relation to these experiences that the purpose of human life might be *Jayeon* (自然, Self-so-ness), *Kwiil* (歸一, Returning to

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 57-8.

⁴⁶⁸ ‘Spring of Seoul’ derived from the political situation in expecting the democratisation during the short period between the military dictatorship government and the new government. Jeonghi Park, who was the president of the military government, was killed in 1980. Although most people wished a new democratic government, unfortunately, a new military government was in control again.

⁴⁶⁹ Hyunju Lee, *Dolabomyeon Baljagugmada Uenchongieotne*, (Whenever I Look Back, There Were Graces on All My Steps), 79-81.

the One), or *Jayu* (自由, Liberation).⁴⁷⁰

2.4. Ministry

After reading the book, ‘*Musoyu* (無所有, Non-possession)’ by *Beobjeong* (法頂), he was deeply impressed, and he decided to give all his possessions away. In 1976 he prayed to God, that ‘if you call me to be a pastor within one week, I would go wherever you want me to’. He wrote this oath in his diary. After a few days he was offered a position in a small fishing village on the east coast, *Jugbyeon* (죽변) in *Uljin* (울진), by one of his friends. He kept his oath and went there, accepting one sixth of his previous salary, in. He also gave all his possessions to somebody.⁴⁷¹ This small church was so poor and his family had to live in a small room adjacent to the church. One year later, he was ordained as pastor. He served the church very hard through his well prepared preaching and Bible study, and a 20-page-weekly church bulletin. His name and church were well known in the area. While he was doing pastoral work from 1976 to 1981, he read extensively and met many religious people. During this period, he had the opportunity to get to know many Catholic fathers and Anglican bishops. Later he received the sacrament of confirmation from the Anglican Church as Francisco Assisi. In particular, he met Ilsun Jang (장일순), who introduced the thought of Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu.⁴⁷² In 1981, Lee moved to a smaller church, but was driven out three months later as a result of ‘the Chinese quince drink’. One of his church members found alcohol in Lee’s house by chance, which he had made for guests, because he himself could not drink at all. Drinking was taboo for pastors in churches by tacit consent. Lee then moved to *Bugok* (부곡) near Seoul, and worked in the Education Department of the Anglican Church. He concentrated on writing and lecturing.⁴⁷³ He returned to pastoral work in 1995 in *Cheolwon* (철원). However, he resigned a year later because of a guilty conscience over his smoking. The law of the Methodist church does not allow pastors to

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 209-13.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 218-38; 243-4.

⁴⁷³ Hyunju Lee, *Geuraeseo Haengboghghan Sin ui Jageun Piri* (그래서 행복한, 신의 작은 피리, As Happy As a Small Flute of God), (Seoul: Saenghwal Seongseo, 1999), 32-9.

drink or smoke. In 1996, Hongdo Kim (김홍도) was elected president of the bishops of the Methodist Church. These had expelled a professor, Seonhwan Byeon (변선훈), from the Methodist seminary on the grounds of teaching religious pluralism. Byeon was Lee's esteemed teacher when he was in the seminary and as a sign of his support Lee immediately asked his provincial synod to omit his name from the list of Methodist ministers.⁴⁷⁴ Since then, he has given lectures freely in various denominations in Christianity and other religions, and produced many writings to date.

2.5. Formation of Lee's Theology

Lee's Christian life started in his early childhood on his mother's knee. His faith continuously grew and his numerous difficulties made his Christian faith strong. After his spiritual experience in hospital he gave his whole life to God. Among his teachers in seminary, Seonhwan Byeon, who was very much interested in religious pluralism in the context of Korea, was the most influential.

Lee's theological discourse began to form in the period of his first ministry at a small church of *Jugbyeon* (죽변). At that time, he enjoyed reading and translating the books of Abraham Joshua Heschel, and had a chance to seriously discuss Taoism with Ilsun Jang (장일순). Later Lee produced the book, 'Walking with Jaung-tzu (장자산책, 1996). Moreover, the opportunities to meet with various Anglican bishops, Catholic fathers, and Buddhist monks provided him with the chance to open his mind to various religious beliefs. Since leaving ministry, he focused only on writing and lecturing. His study about Taoism, Buddhism, etc. intensively began, and he became one of the few people who are able to translate and interpret other religious scriptures. Lee's unique access to the depth and breadth of many religions, through his study of their doctrines, dogmas, rituals and methodologies, qualify him in an exceptional way, to claim that although religious forms may differ externally, all point in the same direction.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 40-1.

⁴⁷⁵ This tendency is present in his book, '*Gil eseo Jueun Saengkagdeul* (길에서 주운 생각들, Thinkings on the Street, 2000).

3. Lee's Understanding of God, Human Beings, and Nature

This section first gives an exposition of Lee's understanding of God, human beings and nature, the basic concepts of Lee's ecological theology. It will provide a significant premise for when we turn our attention to the analysis of Lee's understanding of the relationship between God, human being, and nature, which is the topic of the next section.

3.1. *Onggeun Hana* (옹근 하나, Whole One) God

This section will look at Lee's understanding of God from a holistic or inclusive view and his position on religious pluralism in the theo-centric view.

In Christianity, the concept of God is traditionally conceived as the Creator who creates all things *ex nihilo* (from nothing). It means that God as a transcendent being is originally different from all creatures, and He revealed himself through his creation and the Word (Bible).⁴⁷⁶ God is an omnipotent and omnipresent being who creates and governs the cosmos. Although God is immanent in his providential action, He is mainly conceived as a transcendent being, who cannot be affected by any means. The theological trend of the doctrine of God in Korea has mainly focused on the Word (Bible) as the indirect revelation and Jesus Christ as the direct revelation of God as Jongseong Lee, a systematic theologian states.⁴⁷⁷ Except for through these two revelations, it is impossible to gain true knowledge of God. Other knowledge gained through the natural world or one's experiences, he insists, leads to mysticism. As we have seen in chapter one, the conservatism of the Korean church depends on the absoluteness of the Bible and the divine transcendence.

Lee as a Methodist minister describes the Christian God as the only God. Nevertheless, he understands God as *hana* (하나, One or Whole). He denies the numerical understanding of 'One God', rather considers it as oneness or wholeness that indicates

⁴⁷⁶ Jongseong Lee, *Shinlon* (신론, Doctrine of God), (Seoul: Daehan Kidogkyo Chulpansa, 1985), 9.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 62.

an assembly or accumulation of all possible existences in the cosmos. In other words, the term ‘*hana*’ means something more than accumulating all things in the cosmos as a whole, and the ‘One God’ should be understood in this concept. Lee explains it as follows:

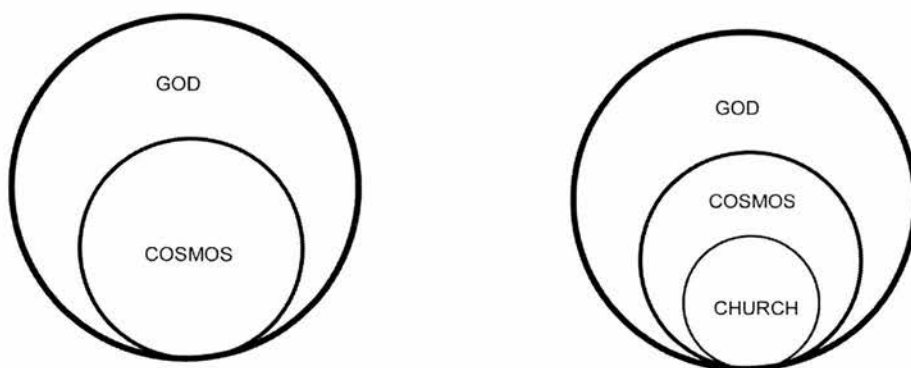
We use the term ‘*hana* (하나, one)’ in two meanings. Such as one, two, three, there is *hana* (one) as the number, and this *hana* is relative. This *hana* exists with many other *hanadeul* (하나들, ones). However, another meaning is *Ongeun hana* (온근 하나, whole one or wholeness) as a whole when all possible existences are assembled. This is an absolute *hana* which cannot be compared to anything. This absolute *hana* has no outside, and it becomes a possible existence that contains everything. God, who Christians believe in, is not relative but absolute. If there is something outside of God, God becomes a relative being, and accordingly it is not the teaching of Christianity. I, as Christian, believe in God, and it means that I stay in the absolute God who has nothing outside him.⁴⁷⁸

Ongeun hana (whole one or wholeness) here means to include all things of the cosmos. There is nothing outside God. In other words, God is not only the origin of the beings of the cosmos, but also is *Ongeun hana* (whole one or wholeness), accumulation of all individual existences of the world. *Hana* (one) as accumulated or assembled might be the nearest understanding to the concept of God. In this holistic view of oneness, Lee understands the concept of God; everything has a unique divine nature, and reveals the presence of God as part of Him. Therefore, the most understandable God by human beings might be *Ongeun hana* (whole one or wholeness) as an accumulated one of all things, and nothing exists outside God.

On this basis, Lee distinguishes the significant terms of *Ann* (안, inside) and *Bak* (밖, outside). He says: “Believing God means to believe in ‘One’, but it is ‘One’ that includes all things. Therefore, believing in God is to stay in the absolute God, who has

⁴⁷⁸ See the web page: <http://dkbs.dongguk.ac.kr/buddha/younggha.htm>. From an online article entitled, *Chamjongkyoin ui Salm* (참종교인의 삶, The Life of True Religious Men), by Hyunju Lee, dated Oct 11, 2002.

no *Bak* (outside)⁴⁷⁹ God has only *Ann* (inside); therefore, nothing can exist independently or irrelatively from the being of God. In this view, the presence of God is expressed in all existences as the immanent being, but also He exists over all things as the transcendent being. Thus, it is his eternality or absoluteness.⁴⁸⁰



God, whose existence has no boundaries, cannot be relative who might be compared to other existences, but an absolute one who exists in, upon, and through all things of the world.⁴⁸¹ On this basis, Lee spontaneously understands the absoluteness and uniqueness, and the transcendence and immanence of God. However, this view is problematic in the Christian understanding of God, because it implies that evil also exists in God. Lee's inclusive understanding of God shows God's omnipresence and omni-providence in, through and upon the cosmos on the one hand, but on the other hand it seems that the place of evil in the world of God eventually belongs to the One God.

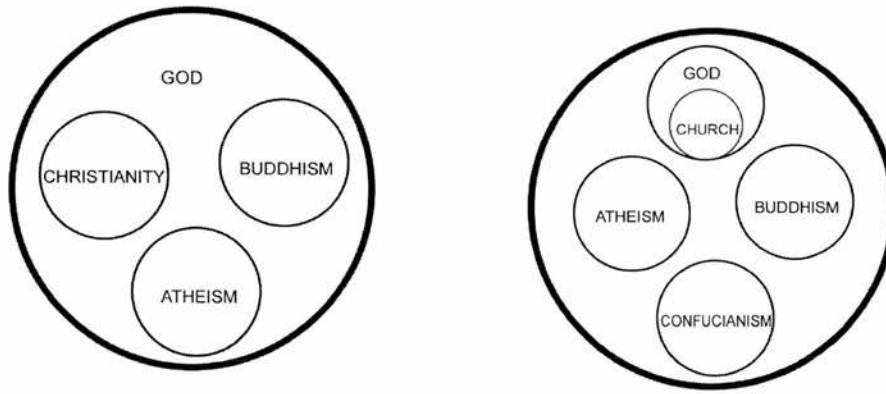
Lee also describes God's relationship to other religions:⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ See the website: http://www.e-sisa.co.kr/~sisa/sisa_main_view.php?id=3464&kind=14. From an online titled, *Jongkyo Dawonjui Pyenuin Lee Hyunju Moksa*, (종교다원주의 펴는 이현주 목사, Rev. Hyunju Lee in Religious Pluralism), interview by Moonjae Lee, Sisa Journal 679, dated Oct. 20, 2002.

⁴⁸⁰ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (젊은 세대를 위한 신학강의 2, Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation), (Seoul: Dasan Geulbang, 1994), 77-8.

⁴⁸¹ Lee often quotes Eph. 4:5-6, John 10:38, and John 15:1-7 for this understanding of biblical references; see Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 18-9; 27-39.

⁴⁸² Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 78-9.



Lee insists that Christianity cannot be an exclusive religion; rather, Christianity should be a religion that can accommodate all things, because Christians, he argues, have no *Ta* (他, *others*) in the one God.⁴⁸³ There is nothing outside God, and everything is in God. On this basis, Lee understands religious pluralism.

This viewpoint raises the question of the difference between Christianity and other religions. Lee, first of all, argues that God cannot be confined to any one name.

God cannot be exclusively possessed by anybody. God does not belong only to Christianity. Religions have variously made up his name such as ‘Yahweh, Allah, *Sangje* (상제, the Being above), *Haneunim*⁴⁸⁴ (하느님, God), *Cheonju*⁴⁸⁵ (천주, the heavenly Lord), etc, but he cannot be confined to these names... Therefore, God is not limited by any people or boundary, and also not restricted to any religion or any “ism”. One thousand theisms are not able to be God, and even ten thousand atheisms are not able to deny him.⁴⁸⁶

God can be called by various names, can be differently understood according to people, cultures, eras or religions, but none of these can completely express or possess God in the realm of their religions and God does not belong to these names because He existed before all these names were designed. Therefore one cannot insist that Christianity is the

⁴⁸³ See the website: http://www.e-sisa.co.kr/~sisa/sisa_main_view.php?id=3464&kind=14. From an online titled, *Jongkyo Dawonju Pyenuin Lee Hyunju Moksa*, (종교다원주의 펴는 이현주 목사, Rev. Hyunju Lee in Religious Pluralism), interview by Moonjae Lee, Sisa Journal 679, dated Oct. 20, 2002.

⁴⁸⁴ *Haneunim* literally means ‘the heavenly Lord’ and is one of the Korean traditional names of God.

⁴⁸⁵ *Cheonju* was used instead of *Haneunim* by Catholic Christians in Korea.

⁴⁸⁶ Hyunju Lee, *Na ui Eomeoni Na ui Kyohoeoyo* (나의 어머니 나의 교회여, My Mother My Church), (Seoul: Jonglo Seojook, 1984), 8-9.

only religion which fully accommodates God, although it might be the nearest religion to God as it proclaims the life of Jesus Christ. Lee recognises God as creator, but he also says that all religions including Christianity are windows through which God can be seen and ways that show truth in their most appropriate circumstances.⁴⁸⁷ Every different religion becomes a reflection of God, partly showing God's presence and will. Christianity, therefore, is not the only way to God, though it is unique for Christians. Christianity is not the object or purpose of faith but an instrument or a way to obtain the truth. Lee confesses that he believes in Christ but not in Christianity, and Christianity is not Christ, because Christianity is only a vessel containing Christ.⁴⁸⁸

Lee has a unique perspective on the life and position of Christ in which he emphasises Jesus' obedience to God over salvation. He understands Jesus as the perfect God and human, the only one throughout the history of the world. Jesus is the clearest manifestation of God, and the perfect human being who has the true human original nature. Lee emphasises Jesus' perfect obedience to God's will.⁴⁸⁹ That is, the significance of the crucifixion lies in Christ's obedience to God and not in what Jesus achieved through that. Therefore, to believe in Jesus means to follow his example and not necessarily to believe in him as the object of faith. Faith is not an emotional or intellectual acceptance of Jesus as Christ, but obeying God's will and his way as Jesus did. In this respect, Jesus is not only the object of faith but also the symbol of faith. He is not only a helper who provides a miracle through a faith but also a master who shows example through his life. Therefore, Lee prefers to call Jesus 'master' in his writings.⁴⁹⁰ Jesus in his perfect divinity and humanity becomes the ultimate model to follow by all human beings. Lee seems to overlook the reconciliation between God and humanity on the cross emphasising justification by obedience rather than justification by divine forgiveness. Lee's position probably originates in his holistic and inclusive concept of God. The person and concept of Jesus Christ is unique to Christianity, but the fact that

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 33-4.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 46-51.

⁴⁸⁹ See Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 1* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 1), 27-65.

⁴⁹⁰ See his book '*YohanBokeum Muksang* (요한복음 묵상, Meditation on John's Gospel)', etc.

the Christian faith focuses on the atonement must have sounded very exclusive, thus unnatural for Lee.⁴⁹¹

In sum, Lee's understanding of God provides the natural world and other religions a space in order to co-exist within the one God, though the transcendent concept of God is relatively reduced. This understanding consequently becomes a basis of the relationship of God, human being and nature.

3.1.1. Lee's Understanding of Religious Pluralism

In relation to religious pluralism two conflicting ideas are worth mentioning.

Exclusivism tends to oppose other religions, excluding them from the realm of divine activity and acting toward them on the basis of ethnocentrism. Inclusivism, on the other hand, admits that the knowledge and experience of the true God can be discovered following other religions, but the fulfilment of such knowledge is possible only through the person of Jesus Christ. This is a dialectical model that shows both acceptance, and critique of other religions' value, as well as an affirmation of Christ's finality.⁴⁹² Lee's inclusive understanding of religious pluralism contains the same problem that reveals a tension between each religion's value and Christ's finality.

Lee's argument corresponds to the theo-centric view including the personal and impersonal (non-personal) ultimate reality of God in religions, which has been made widely known by John Hick, who claims that all great religions including Christianity are various reactions to the ultimate reality (God), the differences between religions stem from their followers' socio-economic, cultural, geo-ecological, or historical backgrounds.⁴⁹³ According to this theo-centric view, the understanding of God as the only eternal (ultimate) being consequently provides a ground to unite various religions.

⁴⁹¹ Hyunju Lee, *Na ui Eomeoni Na ui Kyohoe* (My Mother My Church), 36.

⁴⁹² Weongyu Lee, "Jongkyojeok Baetaseong kwa Jongkyoseong ui Kwangye daehan Kyeongheomjeok Yeongu (종교적 배타성과 종교성의 관계에 대한 경험적 연구, An Experimental Study on Relations between Religious Exclusivism and Religious Character)" in *Jongkyo Dawonjuui wa Jongkyoyunli* (종교다원주의 와 종교윤리, Religious Pluralism and Religious Ethics), Seoul University Religious Study, ed., (Seoul: Jipmundan, 1994), 81.

⁴⁹³ John Hick, *God has Many Names*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 19.

Hick argues that a Christo-centred or church-centred theology is essentially exclusive in respect of other religions, and theo-centric theology includes other religions' experience and truth. All religions are ways to God, or to the Absolute, and on this basis Hick acknowledges the uniqueness and validity of all religions.⁴⁹⁴ Hick recognises a differentiation between a single 'divine noumenon', 'the thing in itself', the divine reality or the absolute which exists behind all religions, and 'the phenomenon', the perception, the mental image, or diverse religions which are humankind's various religious responses to the Absolute.⁴⁹⁵ Hick's understanding of bipolarity consequently leads to a 'theo-centric truth' and 'reality-centred theology'. This distinction between truth and way to the truth, religion, experience, or expression maintains the absoluteness of God and the diversity of religion to overcome inclusivism and exclusivism at the same time. However, it is not certain whether the different concepts of God and the validity of various religious experiences can be reconciled by each religion in the religious dialogue.

Lee agrees with Hick to the extent that there is only one God but diverse religions. Lee believes that God raises, uses, and discharges religions in history according to his will. Lee explains it in the context of Korea as follows:

He is not only a Christian God who made his first step into this land through Western missionaries about two hundred years ago. According to his will, he allowed this people Buddhism through the hand of Chadon Lee (이차돈), provided comfort for the heartbroken through Shamanism, and finally led Christianity into this land through Western missionaries. He is the one who smashed Buddhism when it failed to do its own duty, who took away Shamanism when it did not go its proper way, and who threw away Confucianism when it failed in its duty. If Christianity does not stand on God's will in this land, God will also cast aside Christianity any time. He is God of this land. He is Japanese God in the land of Japan,

⁴⁹⁴ See Ibid., 5-6; John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 131.

⁴⁹⁵ John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, (Hong Kong: Macmillan, 1985), 39; John Hick, *The Second Christianity*, (London: SCM Press, 1983), 82-3.

In this understanding, although God revealed Himself differently to people of different religions, but the God of the Bible, and the one who raised Buddhism, Shamanism, and Confucianism in the land of Korea is the one and the same God. Lee believes that nothing can avoid the one God, including all peoples, all religions, and all creatures throughout the generations.⁴⁹⁷ In other words, all religions have their own natural or original way of leading people to the truth that was given by God, and religious activities that help people find the original way. That is, the ultimate essence of religions is to find the way to the One God, which was originally given by God to them.

However, which religion might be acceptable and which might be not is still to be decided. This theo-centric view looks over religious differences, while focusing on the common ground regarding the concept of God. The unique characteristics of each religion can be in conflict with each other or silenced for the sake of finding common ground.⁴⁹⁸ Moreover, in a multi-religious context, each religious belief rather than recognising the same God, makes people unable to distinguishing between good and evil because of their own different teachings. Nevertheless, this theo-centric view will be of great benefit in reducing antagonism if a dialogue in religious pluralism were to be initiated, and contribute to the companion relationship concerning other religions. In addition it will help to understand indigenous cultures in relation to the Gospel in order to prevent the imperialism of Christianity. It is true that Lee's theo-centric view of God helps people who share a multi-religious background, understand the Christian God in the Korean context.

3.2. Human Being in the Image of God

⁴⁹⁶ Hyunju Lee, *Na ui Eomeoni Na ui Kyohoeoyo* (My Mother My Church), 9; *Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (한송이 이름없는 들꽃으로, As an Anonymous Wild Flower), (Seoul: Jongro Seojeok, 1984), 194-195.

⁴⁹⁷ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 1* (Lecture of Theology for Young Generation 1), 16.

⁴⁹⁸ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 92; John Cobb, "Dialogue without Common ground",

According to the understanding of Genesis, human being had been created in the image of God, and lost his/her original status because of the fall. However, many scholars have argued about the understanding of the image of God.⁴⁹⁹ Mediaeval Latin Scholasticism understood the image of God in distinguishing between the original devine nature by the original grace and the divine communion by the original justice. That is, human being lost the divine communion, which is the original justice, by the original sin, and the divine nature which is the original grace has still remained in human beings. However, the Reformation understood the divine communion as the only image of God, and the divine image was completely lost by the fall.⁵⁰⁰ The image of God has been variously interpreted by scholars.

Lee's understanding of human being is based on the image of God. Lee does not seem to agree that we completely lost the divine image by a result of the fall. He asserts that all human beings have the divine image as the original human nature, and the divine image was distorted or blocked by the fall. However, this divine image is not conceived as an ontological possession in human nature but as a responsibility or an activity. He describes the divine image in largely three aspects: divine action, love, and communication.

Lee claims that the physical and spiritual aspects of human beings are not to be separated in any sense. For Lee, the image of God is not merely conceived as a spiritual inheritance. Therefore, he does not particularly articulate the understanding of human beings alone apart from nature in a spiritual sense. Nevertheless, Lee recognises differences between human beings and nature in terms of the image of God. The differences between humanity and nature are not based on ontological values but arise from one's behaviour: to continuously ask whether one acts as a human being created in the image of God. Human beings in God's image (*imago Dei*) means as follows:

⁴⁹⁹ See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 47-60.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 48-9.

The attribute, which other animals do not have but only human beings have, is God's image. People often find God's image in the attributes of human being such as language, rationality, skill, etc. However, such opinion is not right. Being made in God's image does not indicate any one part of human being but the whole part of the human nature, and not for special humans but every human...God's image is not part of human being, but the whole person. Therefore, to see a human being is like to see God (John 14:9), because human beings reflect the presence of God...That human beings were made in God's image does not mean that their external appearance is like God's, rather it should be read that human beings exist as God exists. In other words, to be made in God's image should not be understood by ontological analogy but by conductional analogy. It is the human's behaviour that resembles God's justice.⁵⁰¹

To be a human being means to be in the image of God, and to be in the image of God indicates that one is to act according to the divine will. In the physical sense, both human beings and animals are the same in the case of 'To be is to stand for'⁵⁰², which reveals the presence of God, but human beings additionally have divine action as part of their original nature because of the divine image. Therefore, to be human being in God's image means to conduct him/herself according to the divine action, and is the ultimate purpose of humanity. Lee explains it as follows:

Saying that human beings were made in God's image, means that human beings are dignified and holy. That human beings can be human beings is to share their original nature (the image of God) with God. This is why human beings are dignified and holy. Human beings are the one who share the same responsibility with God. When God created other creatures, he did not raise his will, but he did when he made human beings in his image... Human beings can only co-operate with God as conducting (or acting). This is the privilege and holy duty of human being acting in God's image.⁵⁰³

The identity of human beings is the divine image, which is holy. Therefore, Lee points out that all individuals have responsibility to continuously assess and re-assess their

⁵⁰¹ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 187-8.

⁵⁰² He quotes this phrase from Abraham Joshua Heschel's book, 'Man is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion (1976)', 28; Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 187.

⁵⁰³ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 188.

identity in various circumstances that can lead to undignified behaviour that is not true to their nature. The reason why human beings continuously should ask the identity of the self is not because human beings have rationality but because they have God's image implying the divine action.⁵⁰⁴ Life continuously changes under the daily circumstances, but human being means 'being human' in any circumstances. Therefore, being human implies a journey through life during which one endlessly asks themselves what they 'ought to be' in an ever changing reality.⁵⁰⁵ Human beings consequently have the desire to act or live according to the divine image, and this is the fundamental difference between human beings and animals (nature).

Secondly, Lee also interprets the image of God as 'need to be needed' which ultimately means love. It means that humans cannot be satisfied with the fulfilment of their desires. Although other creatures live following and fulfilling their desires according to their needs, humans do not simply operate in this way. The life of animals depends on their instincts with which they were endowed at birth, but humans have will as well, which originates in the divine image. This will determines behaviour and action, controls instincts and recognises other people's needs as well as their own. Humans naturally have a need to be needed by others as a result of being created in the image of God.⁵⁰⁶ Lee believes that human beings can only be fulfilled and satisfied if their life is dedicated to the needs of others. The happiness of human beings is fundamentally related to sacrificing themselves for others' needs. 'The ability to make a sacrifice' or 'emptying of the self' is expressed in 'serving others' and it means love.⁵⁰⁷

According to Lee's understanding, love belongs to the original nature of humans, and love does not depend on an external condition. Therefore, humans cannot find love from any other external circumstances, and cannot also fundamentally satisfy without fulfilling love inside the original nature. Lee points out that the desire 'to love' cannot

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 180.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 181.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 188-9.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 188-192.

be fulfilled by any other conditions which come from outside, because this desire to love is the human original nature. To love is one of the indispensable conditions to be a human being, and it is the way for the ultimate happiness.⁵⁰⁸ Additionally, to love also means to change one's view from egocentric to other-centric.⁵⁰⁹ This understanding is based on the recognition of the relative-self. Lee believes that only God is absolute, everything else is relative. Human beings, who have a limited capability, are dependent on others, and it means that human beings can only survive in the mutual relationship with other existences. Therefore, the right discipline for human beings is to give up themselves as the centre of all their actions and to acknowledge others as the centre of their actions, and it is conceived as 'emptying of the self' which means a continuous cultivating in order to reach '*Cham jungsim* (참中心, the true centre of heart)', or 'Absolute one (God)'. On this basis, to love means the endless effort to reach an ultimate self (God) in the mutual relationship of all things.⁵¹⁰

Finally, Lee's understanding of the divine image includes the communication with God. Lee insists that the duty of human beings is to recover the image of God, which is lost. Human beings without the image of God lost '*Haneul* (하늘, heaven)'⁵¹¹, and in order to recover *Haneul* (heaven or the divine image) the individual should hear when there is a calling, message, or commandment that comes from heaven:

Nevertheless, what is the commandment of heaven which has been given throughout all generations, all circumstances? We have to find that. We should recover a concrete commandment of 'live like this' in the commandment 'live or be'. What is the calling that was given to us when we were born during these difficult times? What is the message that was transmitted to us and should be known? If forgotten, we should ask the commander. Fortunately, we have a way to communicate with him through religious activities such as prayer, meditation, or sacrifice.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 192.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., 194-8.

⁵¹⁰ Hyunju Lee, *Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (As an Anonymous Wild Flower), 215-6.

⁵¹¹ Lee often uses the term '*Haneul* (하늘, heaven) meaning God or Absolute one; Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui* 2 (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 199.

⁵¹² Ibid., 200.

Lee understands that human beings need to communicate with God in order to know a concrete commandment in our changing reality. It is quite natural that human beings communicate with God, and religious activities might be the natural means of the communication between human beings and God. The originally granted human nature is continuously asking who am I, and the answer can be obtained from the communication with God who is the original provider. The divine image consequently facilitates communication between God and human beings through which God reveals his commandments and will. Lee calls this state of the perfect unity as ‘*Musim* (無心, absentmindedness)’, ‘*Sunmyeong* (順命, submission)’, or ‘*Muaa* (無我, selflessness)’ which means the total union with God.⁵¹³

In this section, we examined Lee’s understanding of human beings based on the concept of the divine image, which was originally given to human beings. Human beings are different from any other creation because only they are created in God’s image. However, it means that humans must ask in every situation whether the actions they choose help them live up to this image. This image also causes them to love others as they have a ‘need to be needed’, and enables them communicate with God in order to recognise the divine concrete commandment and to achieve the unity between God and human beings. The divine image does not ontologically exist in human beings but is revealed through acting, loving, and communicating. Therefore, the faith in Christianity means to restore ‘the true human being’ in accordance with Jesus Christ who is the perfect example of the divine image that is true humanity and divinity.

3.3. Nature in Divine Nature

In this section we will look at Lee’s understanding of nature. By nature he means the physical world, the living existences, and life. Lee understands nature as the creation of God, and that nature shares the origin, which is God, with human beings. Although nature is not created in the image of God, the fundamental source of nature is the same

⁵¹³ Hyunju Lee, *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sinui Jageun Piri* (그래서 행복한 신의 작은 피리, As Happy As a Small Flute of God), (Seoul: Saenghwoal Seongseo, 1999), 96-105.

as the source of human beings. This way nature and humans are connected in and through God who is the source of all things. The divine nature is conceived as the original nature of each creature given by God, which manifests God's attributes. Forms, patterns, principles, characters, etc., things that everything individually possesses, become the external expression of the divine nature.

Lee does not merely see the physical world as materials and forms, rather he recognises the natural world as mystery. He thinks that no language is capable of explaining the physical world and living beings accurately, for God created the natural world, whose origin of being is mystery as the First Cause or the Ground of Being.⁵¹⁴ Lee thinks that if God has an external form, it would be the physical world or nature. Nature was not accidentally created but was formed by God's precise intention and clear will. A little blade of grass or a small stone reflects *the* something (being or nature) of God, and it is as precious as God.⁵¹⁵ Therefore, for Lee, everything in nature is the manifestation of God, and nature directly reveals a trace or a part of God.

Lee acknowledges diversity and harmony of the physical world. The natures of all things were not accidentally obtained by the process of evolution, but by the determination of God. It means that all existences have something unique from God, and manifest the divine nature through their external forms, patterns, communications, etc.⁵¹⁶ The unique nature of each existence reveals the variety of the divine nature, and leads them to be in the perfect harmony each other because they are originated from one source, God.⁵¹⁷ In this respect, all existences fundamentally express diversity and unity

⁵¹⁴ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 182-3.

⁵¹⁵ See Lee's book, *Mul kwa Nanun Iyagi* (물과 나눈 이야기, The Communicating Story with Things), (Seoul: Yire, 2001), 22-3.

⁵¹⁶ Hyunju Lee, *Amuil Anhago Jalsanda* (아무일 안하고 잘산다, Doing Nothing Living Well), (Seoul: Nokdu, 1993), 15.

⁵¹⁷ In addition, all things also have the means to communicate with one another, with humans and with God. Lee wrote a book on his experience of communicating with things, and confessed that he had a communication with them. Nature has, he insists, a voice, and it can be heard through the mind. This internal communication with all existences seems to be closely related to Lee's spiritual life, and sometimes he was criticised by people as a pantheist. This experience of communication looks like a tendency of mysticism at a glance, but it is reasonable to say that Lee sees the attribute of God through

because of the divine nature caused by the same origin. God who is the divine source of all things is the root of diversity and harmony. Lee sees that the physical world honestly reveals its diversity and harmony, and claims that nature never disobeys God, only human beings do.⁵¹⁸ Therefore, Lee believes that without the destruction of human beings, all things in nature would exist in variety and harmony.⁵¹⁹

Lee's understanding of nature is similar to both Chiha Kim's and Pomnyun's because he also operates with the concept of oneness or connectedness. Everything is connected as one, because the divine nature in all things makes them connect to God and everything.⁵²⁰ Everything depends on God sharing the divine nature, is interconnected in expressing the divine nature as part of God. Nothing can exist alone, because all things are not perfect physically or spiritually; they only reflect God who is alone perfect. Everything physically depends on the natural world and spiritually depends on God. All things can only exist in the relationship of giving and taking.⁵²¹ This is how Lee understands the interdependent relationship and connectedness to one another. Everything is, therefore, brother and sister. Lee strongly emphasises that all things in the world are constituted in a way that reflect One God. He often warns a preconception to understand a being through the given name, because it easily misleads to recognise something as only a defined independent being.⁵²² He deeply recognises a unity of all existences on earth.⁵²³ There is no independent individual and an individual form in the physical world is another appearance of one. After all, Lee understands the oneness or connectedness of all existences through the cosmic divine nature as the manifestation of

the nature of all things and communicates with them. See Hyunju Lee, *Mul kwa Nanun Iyagi* (The Communicating Story with Things).

⁵¹⁸ See Hyunju Lee, *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sinui Jageun Piri* (As Happy As a Small Flute of God), 96-105

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 198-201.

⁵²⁰ See Hyunju Lee, *Amuil Anhago Jalsanda* (Doing Nothing Living Well), 15-6.

⁵²¹ Hyunju Lee, *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sinui Jageun Piri* (As Happy As a Small Flute of God), 28-33.

⁵²² Hyunju Lee, *Geureonikka Museun Malinya Hamyeon* (그러니까 무슨말이냐 하면, Therefore, What It is), (Seoul: Namusimneun Saram, 2001), 22.

⁵²³ Hyunju Lee, *kwa Nanun Iyagi* (The Communicating Story with Things), 34-5.

God.⁵²⁴

Lee did not spend a lot of time formulating ideas related to animate things in his ecological theology, because he probably does not rate them higher than inanimate things. Lee finds that the attributes of sensibility and instinct of the living things are given by God in the creation, but he does not see that these reflect the image of God. He interprets the divine image as ethical responsibility or duty, the sensibility and instinct are ontologically possessed in living things. In this view, living organisms follow their original nature without their will, and it is natural. However, human beings having the divine image have ethical responsibility or duty, and should live in the divine image with their will rather than their sensibility or instinct. The natural law, the food chain, sensibility and instinct are God given attributes reflecting the divine nature. Humans' ethical activities indicate the divine image in Lee's understanding.⁵²⁵

The concept of life is also significant in Lee's thought. All existences including organic and non-organic beings have life. Lee here understands the concept of life as the process of breathing. Everything has *Shum* (숨, Breath), and *Shum* has *Deulshum* (들숨, Inhalation) and *Nalshum* (날숨, Exhalation). Breathing is a continuous stream, movement, connection, or passage coming and going between inside and outside. Life, thus, means a continuous processing of this stream, and it refers not only to organic matters but also inorganic ones.⁵²⁶ Life is continuous change, and change or continuous movement becomes the principle of life. Therefore, Lee understands that life is God's power existing in everything, change is God's activity.⁵²⁷ In this respect, life, after all, means all organic changes of the living or non-living things, and it might be expressed as '*Ki* (氣)' in Eastern philosophy.⁵²⁸ According to Lee, *Ki* might be the nearest concept of the Holy Spirit in Eastern philosophy.

⁵²⁴ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 18-9.

⁵²⁵ See Hyunju Lee, *Amuil Anhago Jalsanda* (Doing Nothing, Living Well), 208-11.

⁵²⁶ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 20-1.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-39.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

In the section, we briefly examined Lee's understanding of God, human being, and nature. He understands God in the concept of *Oungeun Hana* (Whole One) that is the original source of all existences. Various religions become windows to view God and part of God's manifestation. God as the only truth can be diversely named by various religions, cultures and people, and religions and dogmas are instruments which express this truth. Lee recognises that other religions are part of the truth. Lee's understanding of human being is based on the idea that humans are created in the image of God, which is revealed by divine action, love, and communication. The divine image is not an ontological category. Instead, it refers to actions (or behaviour) which are related to ethical responsibility or duty. Nature has divine nature because everything derived from the one source God. All existences are diverse and unique and live in harmony and in an interdependent relationship.

4. Lee's Exposition of the Relationship of God, Human Beings and Nature

In this section we will examine Lee's exposition of the relationship between God, human beings and nature. Three concepts are especially relevant to our inquiry: theocentric kinship, cosmic incarnation, and spirituality. Lee did not systematically develop his ecological theology by any demonstrative methodology. In other words, he did not directly express what his ecological theology is, by emphasising any theoretical or theological arguments along the lines of philosophy or systematic theology. Although Lee did not specifically describe the relationship between God, nature, and human beings, his understanding of the relationship can be explored through several significant ideas.

4.1. Theo-Centric Kinship

Lee's concept of brotherhood originates in the recognition that God is the loving father of creation who does not only govern the cosmos, but also communicate with His creatures. God has been continuously working, sharing, communicating within the

world according to his will from the beginning. According to Lee, when the Son of Man, Jesus, called God Father, He destroyed all discriminations between human beings and nature, and expressed the acceptance of all things in one family of God the 'Father'. On this basis, the understanding of 'Father' God does not simply indicate a believers' father but a 'cosmic Father' who loves all existences of the cosmos. That is why all things are brothers and sisters in creation.⁵²⁹

Father? What is it? This is the only name which makes all creatures brothers and sisters, and which makes all existences have one root and one body. Before the name of 'Father', I and you are not independent individuals any more. Can you see that? How the old and rigid obstacles for thousand years shadows of virtual images are demolished before the holy name 'Father' uttered by Jesus! ... What is Christianity? Is it a revolutionary wind that removed any obstinate and rigid obstacle between human being and human being, human beings and other creatures once for all? All men as brothers and all women as sisters, sun is brother and moon is sister, mountain is brother and brook is sister, etc... In this respect, Francis of Assisi was an almost perfect Christian.⁵³⁰

Lee uses the Gospel of John to justify the notion of brotherhood arguing that it is the main principle of Christianity.⁵³¹ Lee, however, extends the brotherhood to all humans regardless of their beliefs, and to all entities in the cosmos. The Son of Man, Jesus, is not only the Son of God but the first one who showed the world what a true son is and how a son of God should live. Jesus Christ is the representative of all existences, and His Father becomes the Father of all things. Therefore, the brotherhood of all things cannot be destroyed by any religious differences or any discrimination among human beings, and human beings belong to the same family as nature.

Although all things are children of God the Father, there are lost children who wandered off from God. Jesus came to save the lost children, but did not come for *Taja* (타자,

⁵²⁹ Hyunju Lee, *Yohan Bogeum Muksang* (요한복음 묵상), *Meditating on John's Gospel*, (Seoul: Daehan Gidokkyo Seohoe, 1998), 49-52.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁵³¹ See the web site: <http://www.peacenet.or.kr/~kcems/99spirism/leeheanju.htm>. From an online article entitled, *Saengtaejeok Yeeongseong eul Chuguhaneun Sam* (생태적 영성을 추구하는 삶), *Spirituality of the Inquiring into Ecological Life*, by Hyunju Lee, dated July 10, 2002.

others) who are outside God, because nobody has ever been outside God. Therefore, salvation means to forgive the sins stemming from ignoring where one belongs, that one is a child of God and to change people to return to the true way of God's children. Lee often observes that the teaching of Christianity about faith emphasises only the name of Jesus Christ, who achieved the salvation of humankind over upholding the life of Jesus Christ as the perfect model of the true child of God.⁵³² In other words Lee says that Christian faith should be understood as the means and not the purpose of Christian life. Lee thinks that an exclusive attitude of some Christians is mostly the result of considering the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the ultimate objects of faith, and that many people overlook that these are also the motivation and the starting point of a journey in faith toward the kingdom of God. Faith is to open the door to the path leading to the kingdom of God, not the final gate to heaven. In brief, Lee's understanding of brotherhood is based on the principle that all things are brothers and sisters whether they are lost children or not, and in this approach, nature is also brother or sister to human beings, as are people with different beliefs. Lee claims that human beings destroyed the brotherhood by their tendency toward individualism and consequently produced all kinds of discrimination in the world, and the Christian faith can facilitate the recovery of the original relationship of brotherhood between all things.⁵³³

Lee also emphasises sacrifice and love in the relationship between all existences as Jesus Christ did. Christ himself as God and human perfectly showed sacrifice and love throughout his life and death. This is the perfect model of the relationship between God and his creatures, human being and human being, human beings and nature. Jesus Christ, both the representative of God and creation, who sacrificed himself in order to reconcile the relationship between God and the sinful world in his love, became the perfect master showing how to recover the broken relationships between human beings, human beings

⁵³² See Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 81-8.

⁵³³ See the web site: <http://www.peacenet.or.kr/~kcems/99spirisym/leeheanju.htm>. From an online article entitled, *Spirituality of Inquiring Ecological Life*, by Hyunju Lee, dated July 10, 2002.

and nature.⁵³⁴ Therefore, sacrifice and love become an ethical standard in all relationships for human beings. Moreover, God as Father, Jesus Christ as Son, and all creatures as sons and daughters have a communicative relationship with each other. Lee insists that all creatures have a communication channel to God and other creatures if they are not isolated members of the family, and he calls it ‘spirituality’.⁵³⁵

In fact, the relationship of brotherhood is clearly different from stewardship or companionship. Stewardship, which emphasises the human responsibility for nature as a steward, does not seem to overcome an anthropocentric view that the earth is still under the dominion of human beings, and is therefore, subordinate. To overcome this problem, Ruth Page proposed companionship, which emphasises the equality between human beings and nature, interdependence and the distinctiveness of human beings and nature.⁵³⁶ Companionship reveals a beneficial horizontal relationship between human beings and nature, similar to friendship but it does not seem to imply any self-sacrificial relationship. Brotherhood in kinship implies passion and love and can sometimes require such self-sacrifice as Jesus Christ showed. Lee calls Jesus’ example the ‘theocentric kinship of all creation’⁵³⁷ St. Chrysostom and St. Francis also maintained that before the Father, all creatures are children, and all things are in an inseparable kinship.⁵³⁸

Lee established the concept of ‘Cosmic Father’. Everything including Christians, non-Christians, other believers, human beings and non-human beings belong to family in the

⁵³⁴ See Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 1* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 1). This book well presents Jesus’ sacrifice and love through his life which is the perfect model for human beings.

⁵³⁵ See Lee’s book ‘Mul kwa Naun Iyaki (The Communicating Story with Things, 2001)’, he demonstrates his spirituality through the communication with things; Hyunju Lee, *Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (As an Anonymous Wild Flower), 211-5.

⁵³⁶ Ruth Page, *God and the Web of Creation*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1996), 154-5.

⁵³⁷ See James A. Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, (Washington: Abingdon Press, 1991), 97-98.

⁵³⁸ St. Chrysostom confessed that “Surely, we ought show them [Nonhuman animals] great kindness and gentleness for many reasons, but above all, because they are the same origin as ourselves”, quoted in Robin Attfield, *the Ethics of Environmental Concern*, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983), 35; St. Francis also called creatures brothers and sisters for the same reason, see St. Bonaventure, “The Life of St. Francis,” in Andrew Linzey and Tom Regan, eds., *Animals and Christianity: A Book of Readings*, (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 28.

one Father. He recognises that brotherhood means a horizontal relationship between human beings, human beings and nature involving a voluntary sacrifice. After all, Lee sees that all things of the cosmos exist in this close relationship of brotherhood having love, sacrifice and communication.

4.2. The Cosmic Incarnation

The traditional theological understanding of incarnation mainly focuses on Jesus Christ who the Words became flesh. Jesus, who is the perfect God and the perfect human being, is conceived as the second Person, Son of God. That is, the meaning of incarnation is that God became a human being, and it is the unique revelation of God in the world. This understanding of incarnation focusing on human Jesus solidifies the status of human beings in comparison to the status of the non-human world in theological discourse whether it is intended or not. Although Lee also recognises that Jesus is the most perfect model of God and human being in the world, he has a different view of incarnation.

Lee's concept of the incarnation is relevant to us insofar as it points at the inseparable relationship between God and the world. Lee understands incarnation not only as a universal implication of God through Jesus Christ who is the representative of God and the universe as the perfect model of incarnation, but also a cosmic embodiment of God from the creation to the present. The distinction between God and creation is possible on a conceptual level, on epistemological and ontological grounds, but is impossible in reality, because Lee believes that they co-exist inseparably in time and space since the history of the creation began. The acknowledgeable God by human being is the one who is in the world, but not the one who remains outside the world. It is that if God remains God, nobody can recognise him as hidden God. However, if God is something, human being can recognise him. In this view, Lee sees that God became reality through the creation, and incarnation already began from the creation.

The term 'incarnation' is normally used to depict Jesus' divine origin and his human

existence,⁵³⁹ meaning that God became man.⁵⁴⁰ Although it is almost incomprehensible that the infinite God became a changeable and finite substance,⁵⁴¹ incarnation is a symbolic term demonstrating the perfect and inseparable solidarity and relationship between God and his creatures without harming the divine nature and the human nature in Lee's understanding. Incarnation is not a mere form or appearance of God or the divine nature, but reveals the unity between the eternal and absolute God and his finite creatures. In this respect, incarnation does not only include the birth of Jesus Christ but also his whole life: the life of Jesus Christ becomes the perfect model of incarnation. Three points can be narrowed down in the notion of incarnation: first, it is initiated by God; second, God is deeply involved in his creation; and third, the centre of this initiative and involvement is Jesus Christ.⁵⁴² However, James A. Nash developed the concept of incarnation involving the unity of the representative of God and the representative of humanity, and points out that "in identifying with this representative of humanity God, God entered into solidarity not only with all humanity, but also with the whole biophysical world that human embody and on which their existence depends."⁵⁴³ Representation of humanity includes the biosphere, ecosphere, and the universe; the incarnation reveals the cosmic Christ as the representative of the universe. Humans exist in nature and as part of nature, and incarnation confirms the dignity and sanctification of all entities in nature. According to Nash's understanding of incarnation, the incarnate God embraces the whole cosmos 'simultaneously and interrelationally'.⁵⁴⁴

This understanding of incarnation focuses on the historical Jesus who is the perfect model of God and humanity's representative as seen in John's Gospel 1:24. However,

⁵³⁹ Hans Schwarz, *Christology*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 230.

⁵⁴⁰ The term 'incarnation' derives from John's Gospel 1:14: "the Word became flesh (ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο)". The terms 'the Word' and 'flesh' are variously interpreted as 'God', 'One of the Trinity', 'the second person, Son of God', 'divine nature' or 'the Word' itself, and 'human', 'human nature', 'body', 'actual reality', etc. However, there is a widespread consensus in Christian Theology that God and human essence were definitely associated, and in solidarity in Jesus of Nazareth.

⁵⁴¹ See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 219-23.

⁵⁴² See John Macquarrie, "Christianity without Incarnation? Some Critical Comments," in *The Truth God Incarnate*, by Michael Green, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 143, who lists these three points.

⁵⁴³ James A. Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, 108.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

Lee's understanding of incarnation goes beyond the event of the logos becoming flesh and he expanded the concept to the present. Divine incarnation started at the moment of creation, and has been ongoing through the history of the Old and New Testament, in the present and in the future.

Lee claims that the story of the people of the Old Testament is the story of God, that is, he describes the people of the Old Testament as a lot of little prophets who represent the presence of God.

The Old Testament is like a huge story, which is maintained by two pillars; human beings and the other is God. The Old Testament cannot be a story without human beings, and it could not have been born without God... In brief, the Old Testament is like a moving stage that shows God looking for people, and people looking for God... This is a march. It refuses to remain at one place, and is endlessly leaving for the place where God and people meet. After all, the Old Testament is the story in which God and human being are becoming one in the continuous march during history.⁵⁴⁵

Lee's understanding of God in the Old Testament implies not only a creator but also a companion of people and nature. After creating the world, God did not leave the cosmos as deists claim, but he walks with the people, communicating, anticipating, leading or waiting. In other words, God manifests and expresses himself to the physical world through people and nature: Lee refers to God's presence in His creation as incarnation. God is not only a director, who commands his creatures, but also an actor, who acts together with the world on the stage of the Old Testament. People, nature, and events are little gods; expressions of God.⁵⁴⁶ Lee believes that the Old Testament has demonstrated the incarnate God through people, nature and events. In this view, he uses the term 'Exodus of God' analogous to the exodus of Israelites from Egypt.⁵⁴⁷ God and people cannot be separately understood in the Old Testament, and Lee frequently uses

⁵⁴⁵ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui* 3 (젊은 세대를 위한 신학강의 3, Lecture of Theology for Young Generation), (Seoul: Dasan Geulbang, 1997), 12-13.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 13-14.

the term ‘*Judong* (주동, leadership)’ to describe the work of God.⁵⁴⁸

When and how did God lead the Israelites from Egypt? Here, Western theologians have mainly used the term ‘intervention’ or ‘interference’ of God as God’s work in human history, but I would like to deliberately use the term ‘*Judong* (주동, leadership)’. If you say under the condition that God and human history exist separately, the above descriptions would be right. However, If God and human beings are one and cannot be separated from the beginning, and the presence of God and human history are not separate, it could not be said that God intervenes and interferes into human history all over again. That is, it is because that somebody intervenes something means that somebody was out of something, before participating something. God, of course, is not the same being as humans, but he is also not the one who exists apart from human beings. Eastern thinkers in old times called this relationship *Bulibiil* (不二非一, No two not one).⁵⁴⁹

Even though God and the world are distinct from each other ontologically, they cannot be separated. God also does not move *from* heaven *to* the world but is always *in* the world. That is why Lee dislikes the term ‘intervene’ because Lee believes that God does not intervene *from* outside rather he leads *within*. That is why Lee uses the term ‘*Judong* (주동, leadership)’ which indicates the presence of an incarnate God within the world. The Old Testament is the history of Israelites on the one hand, on the other hand the history of God revealed through Jewish people and events, because God and the people were inseparable in the history of the Old Testament. This argument corresponds to the incarnation Christology of Sally McFague, who claims that the dwelling of the divine nature is not only in Jesus but also in the world.⁵⁵⁰ The divine presence and the essential nature of all things are definitely associated.

Lee often warns of the tendency of acknowledging the presence of God only in supernatural power because it easily overlooks the divine presence in a natural (or

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 27-30

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 28-9.

⁵⁵⁰ Sallie McFague, “An Ecological Christology: Does Christianity Have It?”, by Dieter T. Hessel & Rosemary R. Reuther, ed., *Christianity and Ecology*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 31.

general) phenomenon or law.⁵⁵¹ Lee says that this distinction is man made. Lee points out this fact through the example of Moses: God was with the midwives and the Pharaoh's daughter when Moses was born. He did not only appear in the flames in isolation of the previous events of Moses' life.⁵⁵² When God's presence is not obvious Lee talks about the 'hidden' One, who secretly prepares, leads, and anticipates human works or the natural world.⁵⁵³ In this respect, incarnation indicates God's self-expression in the 'flesh' which is recognisable by the world, and the 'flesh' form of incarnation is finite though the divine nature is eternal.

According to Lee, although the cosmic Christ, the Son of God is the perfect model of incarnation, there are other creatures that are incarnations of God. The fundamental difference between Jesus and other creatures is that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Incarnation through creatures is God's self expression or presence revealing in the world, but Jesus himself *becomes* the cosmic Christ the Son of God through the work of the Trinity and is not a divine self expression. Jesus reveals the whole and complete divine nature, but other creatures are not as Jesus though they are incarnations of God. On this basis, incarnation is not one historical event, rather it has been taking place continuously, from the creation to the present through the various 'fleshes' or creatures.⁵⁵⁴

Lee tries to demonstrate the presence of an organic union between God and the cosmos

⁵⁵¹ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 3* (Lecture of Theology for Young Generation), 29-30.

⁵⁵² Hyunju Lee, *Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (As an Anonymous Wild Flower), 184.

⁵⁵³ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 3* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 3), 29.

⁵⁵⁴ See Hynju Lee, *Yohanbokeum Muksang* (Meditation on John's Gospel), 23-33; John Hick similarly understands incarnation as the actual expression appearing in the devotion of Christians rather than the only exact metaphysical truth. However, Hick sees incarnation as a mythological or symbolic concept, which can be applied to any objects, by practical experiences of religious belief. See John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths, Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, (London: Basingstoke, 1975), 165; Lee's view is similar to the understanding of the cosmos as God's embodiment by Sallie McFague. She metaphorically describes God as having a body in conceiving both God's immanence and transcendence, and argues that God is an embodied spirit and the cosmos is an inspirited body. Although she tried to overcome the dualistic understanding of spirit and body, it seems to be seen as reuniting spirit and body which are the by-product of dualism. See Sallie McFague, *The Body of God*, (London: SCM Press, 1993), 19-20.

or spirit and body, which is impossible to separate, as opposed to a mechanical union, which can disintegrate. Lee's definition of God and the cosmos is based on the idea of the inseparable God and nature. That is why he prefers to use the term incarnation rather than revelation which means that the transcendental God reveals himself in the world.⁵⁵⁵ The dualistic understanding between the transcendental God and the world according to which, God came to the world and revealed himself in it, is not acceptable for Lee. Lee believes that God and his creation inseparably co-exist in the world from the beginning through incarnation.

Moreover Lee points out that the physical world has been relatively neglected in the theological discourse of incarnation, because the meaning of incarnation mainly indicated only human flesh. However, flesh does not only indicate human but also the physical world, and Jesus Christ is not only the representative of God but also the one of the creation. In this view, Lee claims that incarnation is cosmic which includes all entities in the universe. In this view, Lee quotes Eph. 4:5-6 as the proper understanding of incarnation.⁵⁵⁶

Although all things are the incarnate beings of God, they are imperfect, because the imperfection of all creatures is intrinsic to the physical world. Lee claims that the perfect fulfilment of the incarnation can be only achieved through the perfect unity of God and the physical world as the example of Jesus Christ who is the perfect model of incarnation and a Mediator between God and creation. Therefore, Lee calls the fulfilment of incarnation the triune indwelling (三重內在)' which means that God, humanity, and nature co-exist in reality.⁵⁵⁷ Jesus is the perfect symbol of the triune relationship of God, human being, and nature. Lee also describes it as 'love', because

⁵⁵⁵ Gyunjin Kim, *Kidogkyo Jojiksinhak I* (기독교 조직신학 I, Christian Systematic Theology I), (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1984), 114; He as a well-known systematic theologian in Korea asserts that 'revelation' means to appear a transcendental being of God which does not belong to the world and is fundamentally different from this world.

⁵⁵⁶ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 19; Eph. 4:5-6 says "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

⁵⁵⁷ Lee explains it in the interpretation of John's Gospel 14:20: "On that day you will realize that I am in my father, and you are in me, and I am in you."

love as a relational concept needs a partner and is only achieved in this relationship. The three different realities, God, humanity, and nature become one through love in the triune relationship.⁵⁵⁸

In sum, Lee understands that incarnation is the cosmic presence of God including all creatures as well as human beings. Jesus Christ is the perfect model of incarnation, shows a triune relationship as the unity of the representatives of God and the physical world. Incarnation shows an inseparable relationship between God and the creatures from the creation to the present day. Therefore, all things are the examples of incarnation which unite God and the physical world though they are not the perfect model as much as Jesus Christ. Conclusively, incarnation means the inseparable unity of God, humanity, and the universe, Lee sees the unity of all through the understanding of incarnation.

4.3. Spirituality

So far we have examined the theo-centric kinship and incarnation in order to analyse Lee's ideas of the relationship between God, human beings, and nature. Another significant idea is the concept of spirituality, which acts as the bridge between God and human beings (the universe), humanity and nature, church and society. Spirituality is a dynamic activity among all entities that have the divine nature. Lee's understanding of spirituality has two characteristics: social practice and communication with things. Practice reflects the inseparable relationship between church and society, and the experience of communicating with things reveals the relationship between humanity and nature.

Lee approaches spirituality on the basis of 'to do the will of God who is in Heaven'.⁵⁵⁹ Practice is to do the will of God. Apart from prayer and worship Lee expects the

⁵⁵⁸ Hynju Lee, *Yohanbokeum Muksang* (Meditation on John's Gospel), 267-73.

⁵⁵⁹ This understanding is based on Matt. 7:21; See Hynju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui* 1 (젊은 세대를 위한 신학강의 1, Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 1), (Seoul: Dasan Geulbang, 1994), 55-7.

believer to be socially active and aware of the suffering of others. He often criticises the tendency to emphasise only religious and mystical experience that focuses on ‘being filled with the Holy Spirit’.⁵⁶⁰ He condemns those churches for neglecting their neighbours and the isolated *Minjung* who have been suffering throughout the modern history of Korea.⁵⁶¹ The pursuit of personal salvation and mysticism is one of the shortcomings of the present day Korean churches. It is called *Gibokshinang* (기복신앙, Faith of asking fortune) in Korean and it is a product of the Korean War, the influence of Shamanism and the emphasis put on the future kingdom by the early missionaries.⁵⁶² *Gibokshinang* lacks responsibility toward neighbours and society and fails to recognise that the church is an instrument through which God acts out his will in the world. Lee maintains that personal religious experience is important insofar as it reveals God’s will at the same time, and it is not practiced for its own sake.

Nowadays, the stage of the activity of the Holy Spirit includes not just the ‘church’, but also the whole world. Church is not his nest but his hand and foot. We cannot discover the Holy Spirit in the church; rather we can see the church in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will judge the churches on the earth according to his own rule, and some churches will become more mature and other churches will collapse. The churches which put themselves to a place of humility will mature with history, and the churches which put themselves high will be demolished...He goes down like water,...and gives hope to the one who is despairing, picks up the one who is fallen,...drops the one who is conceited.⁵⁶³

Lee sees the church as God’s instrument for the world. The church and Christians are the subjects that exercise God’s will for the world, and are not objects that merely experience God’s will in isolation from the world. The Holy Spirit does not belong to the church but is in the world. The church exists for the world in the Holy Spirit in order

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 213.

⁵⁶¹ See Hyunju Lee, *Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (As an Anonymous Wild Flower), 211-3.

⁵⁶² See Heungsu Kim, *Hankugjeonjaeng kwa Gibokshinang Hwaksan Yeongu* (한국전쟁과 기복신앙 확산 연구, Korean War and the Study of *Gibokshinang* Expanding), (Seoul: The Institute for Korean Church History, 1999); Kim mainly sees the cause of *Gibokshinang* in the influence of the Korean war. He insisted that the post war society naturally pursued individual safety and fortune. See also the website: <http://user.chollian.net/~ikch0102/nm12-10.htm>. From an online article entitled, *A Book Review*, by Jeongmin Seo, dated on Dec 10, 2002; Seo criticises Kim’s view and adds that other influences are Shamanism and Evangelical theology of Korea.

⁵⁶³ Hyunju Lee, *Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (As an Anonymous Wild Flower), 213.

to exercise. Lee also understands a religious experience or awakening. Lee has had many religious or even mystical experiences and he maintains that these strengthened his commitment to God, which in turn motivated him to carry out God's will in the world.⁵⁶⁴ The personal experience is not the purpose of religion but an instrument for the benefit of neighbours and society. Therefore, spirituality should have social and practical dimension: there is an inseparable relationship between church and the world, experience and practice.

Lee's social involvement started with his early writings that focused on the corruptions of the dictatorial government and the big churches.⁵⁶⁵ His main concern was always the people and nature, not the mainstream concerns of society, and his life was poor and simple. Most people did not recognise him as a minister because of his old traditional clothes. He preferred to live in the countryside; moreover he would hesitate to kill even a little fly. He always tried to understand traditional religions and reinterpret various themes of Christianity and other religions. Moreover his deep knowledge of the traditional religions provided many Christians with a chance to understand other religions in the light of Christianity. His spirituality also became an example of a harmony between church and society, and experience and practice.

The other characteristic of Lee's spirituality is the communication with things. Lee is one of the very few people who had mysterious conversations with various things. He wrote these down in '*Mul kwa Nanun Iyagi* (물과 나눈 이야기, The Communicating Story with Things, 2001)' including conversations with tree, grass, stone, branch, fly, waste bin, mirror, dragonfly, seed, glasses, clock, pencil, etc.⁵⁶⁶ Lee claims that because

⁵⁶⁴ See his books such as '*Mul kwa Namun Iyagi* (The Communicating Story with Things, 2001)', '*Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Simui Jageun Piri* (As Happy As a Small Flute of God, 1999)', and etc.

⁵⁶⁵ See Hyunju Lee, *Nau'i Eomeoni Nau'i Gyowhoiyeo* (My Mother My Church), (Seoul: Jongro Seojeok, 1984); *Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (As an Anonymous Wild Flower), (Seoul: Jongro Seojeok, 1984).

⁵⁶⁶ Lee published a book called '*Mul kwa Nanun Iyagi* (The Communicating Story with Things)' in which he transcribes his conversations with all sort of organic, inorganic and man-made things. We cannot be sure whether these conversations are the product of Lee's imagination or telepathy because Lee does not clarify his method. However, he claims that he could communicate with things when he emptied his mind. He considers this communication a spiritual experience even though the general understanding of spirituality is confined to the relationship between God and human beings.

God's spiritual power (the divine nature) is present in nature, we can communicate with nature and recognise God in nature. As we have seen before, everything has a unique God-given nature, thus they are manifestations of God. Therefore, he rightly places communicating with things in the spiritual realm.

His experience of communicating with nature does not emphasise a supernatural ability of human beings,⁵⁶⁷ rather it points to the fact that all entities are able to communicate with nature, and thus have the same rights to live and love (or to be loved) as human beings.⁵⁶⁸ Whenever human beings deprive things from their rights they commit sin because they do not recognise God's presence and intention in creation. Therefore, humans must respect the holiness and dignity of nature. He thinks that nature honestly expresses God's presence and intention, and communicating with it is part of our spiritual life, which provides a rediscovery of the way of life which was originally given. Consequently, Lee shows that humanity and nature have a spiritual relationship, and God, human beings, and nature are one in this spirituality.

In sum, spirituality reveals the harmony between church and the world, personal experience and social practice, which are inseparable. According to Lee, spiritual experience in the church is the instrument that helps find out God's will and spiritual practice in the world is the purpose of it. His spirituality reflected the religious pluralism, helps to understand Christianity in the multi-religious context.⁵⁶⁹ The unique form of his spirituality is the possibility of communication with various things. He claims that everything has a spiritual notion which is the divine nature, and through this spiritual communication, God, humanity and nature become one. Spirituality is a dynamic communication in the inseparable relationship between God, humanity and nature. In

⁵⁶⁷ After the conversation with a centipede, he and his family were not bitten any more at home. See the web site, <http://www.peacenet.or.kr/~kcems/99spirism/lee-gine.htm>. From an online article entitled, *Jineneun Jukeoya Haneunga?* (지네는 죽어야 하는가? Centipede Must Die?), by Hunju Lee, dated on Dec 10, 2002; See his book, *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sinui Jageun Piri* (As Happy As a Small Flute of God), 212-7.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 147-9; As an example, in the dialogue with the tree of persimmon he discovers the way of love and sacrifice as the meaning of life through the sequences of blooming and bringing fruits etc.

⁵⁶⁹ This tendency is clear in his book *'Gil eseo Jueun Saengkagdeul* (길에서 주운 생각들, Thinkings on the Street, 2000).

relation to the understanding of spirituality, Lee claims that “God is *Mumyeong* (무명, nameless) and *Bulgamyong* (불가명, not possible to name), because God is connected to everything, and confesses that “I am *Mumyeong* too, because I am not apart from *Samlamanssang* (삼라만상, all things of the cosmos). Therefore, I am mankind, cosmos, and history.”⁵⁷⁰

5. The Characteristics of Lee's Ecological theology

In the previous section, we saw that Lee's understanding of the relationship between God, humanity and nature is revealed through his ideas of theo-centric kinship, cosmic incarnation, and spirituality. Lee recognises that all things are brothers and sisters in the one cosmic Father God though He can be expressed differently according to principles or doctrines of various religions. He claims that the concept of incarnation does not only mean the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, but also involves the creation of all things from the beginning at the same time. All things are incarnate being of God. Lee also reveals that oneness or unity of all existences can be experienced through spirituality. Finally, God, humanity, or nature cannot be defined or understood separately or independently of each other.

In this section we will look at some significant theological characteristics of Lee, which are related to ecological theology. His theological characteristics about ecological theology reveal these three elements: incarnation over revelation, Jesus Christ as the perfect Master and universal spirituality.

5.1. Incarnation over Revelation

Lee's understanding of incarnation seems to be much wider than the traditional position of Christian history which normally focuses on historical Jesus. He understands that Jesus is the perfect model of incarnation but is not the only incarnation; rather, all creatures from the beginning became incarnation. That is, his understanding of the

⁵⁷⁰ Hyunju Lee, *Jangja Sanchaek* (장자산책, A Walk with Chuang-tzu), (Seoul: Dasan Guelbang, 1996), 22.

creation does not derive from the concept of ‘out of nothing’ but ‘out of God’. The concept of ‘out of nothing’ implies that the existence of God is only spiritual, not physical, and leads to the misunderstanding that creation, which is the physical world, is not related to the fundamental nature of God, thus the physical nature of God is not properly understood in the doctrine of creation. For Lee, creation is not the product of God but part of God, and the existence of God means both spiritual and physical realities. Lee was reluctant to use the concept of revelation, which might give an impression of the separation between spiritual and physical divine appearance, which comes from outside the world. That is, incarnation implies an inseparable divine nature within this physical world spiritually and physically.⁵⁷¹ Therefore, incarnation is not one of God’s revelations, rather, all God’s revelations are different expressions of the divine incarnation.

In fact, the doctrine of incarnation in Christianity has been traditionally treated in the understanding of the John’s gospel 1:14⁵⁷² which indicates that the Second Person of the Trinity (the Word) became a human being (flesh) in Jesus Christ who has the perfect divine nature and the perfect human nature. The word ‘incarnation’ was adopted, during the twelfth century, from the Norman-French, which took it from the Latin *incarnatio*. The Latin Fathers e.g. Saints Jerome, Ambrose, Hilary, etc. in the 4th century made common use of the word. The Latin *incarnatio* (*in: caro*, flesh) corresponds to the Greek *sarkosis*, or *ensarkosis*, which is used in John 1:14 *kai ho Logos Sarx egeneto*. These two words were in use by the Greek Fathers from the time of St. Irenaeus in the second century according to Harnack.⁵⁷³ The meaning of incarnation seems to traditionally provide three aspects pointing out that Jesus Christ is the divine Person who is the Second Person of Trinity, Christ, and Messiah, he is also human who has not only a body but also the nature of human being, a nature capable of suffering, sickness

⁵⁷¹ This viewpoint has been clearly revealed in his book, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui* 3 (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 3). This book describes the embodiment of God in creation and the history of Israel through the exposition of the Old Testament.

⁵⁷² John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (NIV).

⁵⁷³ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui* 2 (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation), 77-8.

and death, and Jesus is the hypostatic union of the divine nature and human nature rather than the mere juxtaposition of these two natures. The mysterious and inseparable joining of these two natures denies not only the juxtaposition but also monophysitism which insists on one nature in Christ. The authentic clarification about the meaning of incarnation was made by the Council of Chalcedony (451) saying “perfect in Divinity and perfect in humanity... consubstantial with the father according to His Divinity, consubstantial with us according to His humanity... one and the same Christ, the Son, the Lord, the Only begotten, to be acknowledges in two natures not intermingled, not changed, not divisible, not separable.”⁵⁷⁴ In this respect, incarnation was traditionally applied to Jesus Christ who is the union of perfect divine nature and the perfect human nature.

However, Lee claims that Jesus is not the only incarnation but the perfect model of incarnation. He believes that Jesus is the clearest incarnation since creation. Since the universe, particularly humanity lost their original divine nature, Jesus, who is God and human being, has shown the way of redemption as the perfect model although there were many attempts to recover the original state of the divine nature by various religions during the history of mankind. In this view, Jesus Christ is unique and incomparable to others, but he is not the only model of incarnation. Therefore, other religions might provide a hint to recover the original divine nature. Although this inclusive position towards other religions was frequently criticised by other conservative theologians, it is meaningful to accept other religions as partners in the multi-religious society. Because most of the complicated social issues such as ecological crisis are inevitably related to the multi-religions context and it requires dialogue between religions.

In relation to the kingdom of God (or the heavenly world), salvation does not mean to move from worldly life to a utopian life, from the physical world to a spiritual world, or from the realistic view to the futuristic view. Salvation is to redeem the original divine

⁵⁷⁴ See Denzinger, n. 148.

nature, which derived from God in the beginning, and to incarnate it ‘here’, ‘now’, in ‘reality’ as Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a matter of time or space but a change of mind.⁵⁷⁵ Lee believes that everything has its own incarnated nature physically and spiritually; the meaning of salvation must be different in reality according to their nature of incarnation.

In addition, Lee also believes that every event or history contains a divine mark which human beings might realise the presence of God. He insists that various events of the Old Testament have proved this fact. History is the road which God and human beings walk down together, and good and evil, joy and suffering depends on the degree of unity between God, human being, and nature.⁵⁷⁶

Lee believes that not only the existence of God should be understood spiritually and physically at the same time, but the existence of humanity and nature as well. The creation derives from ‘out of God’, and the physical world itself is the divine presence. The physical world as a tangible form or nature of God cannot be excluded from theological discourse. The argument that the original nature of God is not only spiritual but also physical, of course, does not mean to limit the supernatural power or omnipotence of God, rather he understands that the divine nature exists in the physical world as holiness. The material things are no longer objects to be discriminated against by human beings. Moreover, he believes that a true human being should exercise the original nature in the physical and spiritual sense. The spiritual and physical exercise here means a communication with God and other things. Through the understanding of incarnation, Lee recognises nature as a member of family or a company that has divine nature, and the physical nature is holy.

Although the concept of incarnation may be argued by various doctrinal viewpoints, it is

⁵⁷⁵ Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui* 1 (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 1), 112-5; *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui* 2 (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 91-112.

⁵⁷⁶ See Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui* 3 (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 3), 11-16.

certain that Lee's understanding of incarnation provides a space for a Christian way of reconciliation with other religions in relation to doctrine. The desire not to collide with other religions naturally stems from the multi-religious context of Korea. Lee as a Christian minister has a unique position in compared with the standpoint of most other Christians who hold an exclusive position in relation to other religions. In fact, the exclusivism sometimes causes as much serious trouble as destroying a Buddhist statue, and cultural assets of Korean traditions, with the tacit consent of mainstream churches. Lee sees that the problem mainly came from the theological tendency of the early western missionaries who were mostly Americans who had not experienced other cultures before. They taught the early Korean Christians that all other religions are involved in idolatry, and they singled out ancestor worship as a typical example. Since then, Christianity in Korea has created problems and conflicts with other traditional religions. Lee's inclusive attitude towards other religions through his concept of incarnation helps to understand commonalities and differences of various religions from a Christian viewpoint. Lee studied other religious scriptures such as Te-Tao Ching of Taoism, Diamond Sutra of Buddhism, Book of Changes, Analects of Confucianism, etc., along with the Bible.⁵⁷⁷ However, his standpoint, which is based on theo-centric kinship, can be problematic, because Christians, who accept this argument, can accept other religious principles but other religious believers especially the atheist Buddhists will not accept the existence of God.

By way of conclusion, although Lee's concept of incarnation can lead to various theological or religious arguments, it is obvious that Lee's understanding of incarnation provides theological explanations regarding the physical reality, a religious homogeneity in the multi-religious context.

5.2. Christ as Redeemer or Master

Lee prefers to call Jesus as the 'Master' rather than 'Saviour' or 'Mediator'. As it is

⁵⁷⁷ See Hynju Lee, *Gil eseo Jueun Saengkagdeul* (Thinkings on the Way), (Seoul: Ullim, 2000); In this book, he translates and interprets as quoting more than ten scriptures in various religions.

described in the previous section, Lee conceives Jesus Christ as the perfect model of incarnation, the most explicit example of Christian life. It is common to call ‘a respectable or honourable person’ Master by his/her disciples in Korea. The master was traditionally recognised as a teacher who does not only teach people but also perfectly acts according to his/her teachings and becoming the example for the people. Therefore, the master was considered as one of the three most honourable people (the other two being the king and parents). Jesus is Master because He perfectly fulfils God’s will. Lee through the meaning of the Master implies two things: practicality and continuity.

Lee sees that Jesus is not only the mediator who reconciled God with human beings through the Atonement but also the master. That is, Lee emphasises the obedience of Jesus Christ through his whole life in the flesh. The event of the cross is conceived as the symbol of his obedience, but it is not regarded as the final object of Christian faith. Lee believes that the forgiveness of sins was achieved by Jesus’ obedience and not by his death. His death on the cross was the result of the obedience.⁵⁷⁸ In this respect, Lee emphasises the practicality of faith by obedience rather than the meaning of faith through the interpretation of the cross. Therefore, Lee’s most writings on the meaning of faith derives from the question ‘what did Jesus do?’ rather than ‘what is the meaning of his death?’.⁵⁷⁹ He believes that Jesus is the only master who perfectly practiced obedience to God. It is why Lee prefers to call Jesus Christ as the Master, who shows the perfect example of life which people should follow, rather than the Saviour or Mediator, which implies the religious symbols and meanings. The practicality of obedience becomes the core of Christian faith in his understanding of Jesus Christ.

Lee also finds the meaning of Christian faith in Jesus’ life. Faith is not a rational knowledge or recognition about Jesus Christ but practice and obedience to follow the way of Jesus. Obedience here means to get rid of all artificial elements, which affect the

⁵⁷⁸ This tendency is clear in his book ‘*Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 1* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 1), which is about ‘the life of Jesus and his way’, and emphasises the obedience through practice; See this book, 41-51.

⁵⁷⁹ See Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 1* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 1), 189-99.

formation of the self, and to reveal the divine nature as Jesus did through his life. In other words, Christian life means to live as Jesus did: a natural, sacrificial, integrative, non-possessive, generous, loving, humble life.⁵⁸⁰ In this respect, Lee obviously does not agree with the modern Christian lifestyle which is influenced by capitalism, industrial civilisation, free market economy, etc., and regards them as the enemy of Christian faith. He strongly insists that none of these ideologies are related to Christian faith, and Christians should distinguish these elements from Christian faith.⁵⁸¹

Lee's lifestyle reflects self-cultivation such as discipline, meditation, non-possession, mind-emptiness, etc. Self-cultivation emphasises natural life and non-possession. Meditation through reading the Bible and books, writing down his thoughts, and walking in the countryside is his favourite time in daily life, and most of his writings were produced through these deep meditations. He tries to have only few clothes, a few books, and a small amount of money during his travels when preaching or lecturing. Whenever he has more than that, he willingly gives to others.⁵⁸² He also controls food in his daily life, he tries to eat only as much as is necessary. Emptying the mind means the effort to recover 'the true self' or 'the original self' which can be achieved by taking off the hypocritical self. Therefore, he continuously attempts to be a relativistic object, because he knows the limitation and imperfection of the self which can be easily changed. He always looks out for a fixed view or an absolute self which might be formulated through special experiences or knowledgements, because he believes that Christian faith means to recognise the imperfection of the self and to rely on the absoluteness of God. And he tries to make himself relative in this sense. He distinguishes and explains the difference between Christianity and Christ, because Christ as the content is absolute but Christianity as a vessel is relative.⁵⁸³ Conclusively, the relative self through the continuous self-emptying can achieve his absolute self. In

⁵⁸⁰ This viewpoint has been numerously revealed in his book, *Yohanbokeum Muksang* (Meditation on John's Gospel).

⁵⁸¹ See Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 1* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 1), 217-27.

⁵⁸² Hyunju Lee, *Dolabomyeon Baljagugmada Uenchongieotne*, (Whenever I Look Back, There Were Graces on All My Steps), 209-18.

⁵⁸³ Hyunju Lee, *Nai Eomeoni Nai Gyowhoiyeo* (My Mother My Church), 46-51.

fact, his self-cultivating focuses on the effort to discover the absolute self that unchangeably exists as *Jungsim* (중심, the centre of heart).⁵⁸⁴ Jungsim, which is the absolute self, is the original nature of humanity which was given by God in the beginning, in Lee's understanding. On this basis, probably *Muwi Mubulwi* (무위 무불위, Not doing nothing as doing nothing)⁵⁸⁵ might be the typical phrase for his self discipline.⁵⁸⁶ To get rid of the self that is affected by modern currents and to follow the footprint of Jesus becomes the ultimate direction of his cultivation and the purpose of his Christian faith.

The name of the master also implies continuity of faith. He claims that Jesus' righteous life is still working in the present day through Christian faith. His lifestyle is the ultimate model of Christian faith for the modern people. In this respect, justification by faith becomes a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition for the fulfilment of the kingdom of God, rather obedience is a sufficient condition. Although Lee recognises that Christian faith needs both elements, he thinks that righteousness by obedience is more important than justification by faith. It is because justification is not merited by human deeds but given freely by God to all, and righteousness requires an ethical practice which one should exercise. In other words, justification is based on the death of Jesus on the cross and righteousness is related to the perfect obedient life of Jesus. Therefore, Christians should continuously participate to social issues to fulfil the kingdom of God by righteousness.⁵⁸⁷ It naturally follows the contemporary ecological issues are not to be ignored by Christians, rather they are urgent matters which should be dealt with.

3. Dynamic Communication (Spirituality)

Lee's spiritual practices include a traditional understanding of spirituality which focuses

⁵⁸⁴ Hyunju Lee, *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sinui Jageun Piri* (As Happy As a Small Flute of God), 12-21; 53-62; 74-80.

⁵⁸⁵ As one of the typical phrases of Taoism it has been described in *Te-Tao Ching* of Lao-tzu. It means that you can do everything as not doing anything. The natural life without bearing any artificial mind is the perfect life that has no insufficiency and excess by any artificial effort or doing.

⁵⁸⁶ Hyunju Lee, *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sinui Jageun Piri* (As Happy As a Small Flute of God), 96-105.

⁵⁸⁷ Hyunju Lee, *Nai Eomeoni Nai Gyowhoiyeo* (My Mother My Church), 60-6.

on the relationship between God and humanity as well as on communication of all things in the universe. Nature is not only different materials but consists of personal partners. Nature does not exist for human benefit but is a friend or a member of a family that can communicate and live together.

Lee's understanding of spirituality is deeply related to the concept of God, and the original nature of all existence. He believes that God does not only exist in any particular place for example a heaven or church but everywhere, and humans can communicate with him through anything in anywhere if human being tries. That is, God does not only show himself to human beings but also equally reveals his presence in the natural world, and manifests his personal or impersonal nature through all existences.⁵⁸⁸

This viewpoint suggests a balance in the relationship between human being and God, and human being and nature in the theological discourse. Therefore, Lee thinks that it is necessary to articulate the impersonal nature of God which God presents himself in the natural world.⁵⁸⁹ For Lee, God is not a transcendent creator who stays out of his creation and controls his creatures, but he continuously exists, participates, and communicates within his creatures. In this respect, all creatures reflects the divine nature from the beginning whether they are personal or impersonal, all creatures as parts of God are holy. Consequently, Lee opens a door for a theological discourse which considers the relationship between human being and the natural world as well as the relationship of human being and God.

Because all existences are part of God, everything has an ability to communicate. That is, the natural world somehow can communicate with God and other existences. The argument, according to which everything reacts and communicates by various methods, had already been put forward by James E. Lovelock as the theory of Gaia that sees the

⁵⁸⁸ See his book '*Hansongi Ireumeopneun Deulkkot uiro* (한 송이 이름없는 들꽃으로, As an Anonymous Wild Flower)'.
⁵⁸⁹ See the web page: <http://dkbs.dongguk.ac.kr/buddha/youngha.htm>. From an online article entitled,

Chamjongkyoin ui Salm (참종교인의 삶, The Life of True Religious Men), by Hyunju Lee, dated Oct 11, 2002

earth as a living organism.⁵⁹⁰ Lovelock describes the communication through the biochemical process and circulation, but Lee claims that it happens through a spiritual experience or communication between human being and nature. This tendency could seem pantheistic, involving worshipping the earth by some followers of the Gaia theory, but Lee's experience is based on the belief that all existences have a divine nature. God is communicative; therefore, everything that derives from him must be communicative. Moreover, through the communication with the natural things, human being can know God.⁵⁹¹ Although physical forms have different appearances, they are originally the same and one. He shows how abundant Christian life is, and invites us to experience the communication. Nature as a close friend, who can communicate with us, is no longer the material world. In this understanding, Christian spirituality does not mean only the communication with God but also the one with nature. This understanding is based on the inseparable relationship between God, humanity, and nature, this spirituality is an ideal model of Christian life. However, it is not easy to find the place of sin in Lee's argument. In fact, Lee does not clearly speak about the existence of sin in his writings. Probably it is not easy for him to accept the existence of sin which is outside God, because everything is God's manifestation. He recognises sin as 'to be apart from the origin, God', or 'the original nature' which was given by God. To be a Christian, therefore, is to live according to the original or fundamental nature in the image of God. Unfortunately, the original nature was changed or distorted by various artificial elements, and the goal of spirituality is to get rid of the artificial elements, and to redeem the original nature that can fully communicate with God. Lee sees that human beings can find God through the communication with things, and communication helps to realise a unity of God, human being, and nature.⁵⁹² Therefore, the disconnection of the communication means to kill one's original nature and to be separated from it and that is the meaning of sin.

⁵⁹⁰ See James E. Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

⁵⁹¹ See his autobiographical books; *Dolabomyeon Baljagugmada Uenchongieotne*, (Whenever I Look Back, There Were Graces on All My Steps); *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sinui Jageun Piri* (As Happy As a Small Flute of God).

⁵⁹² See Hyunju Lee, *Jeolmeun Sedaereul wihan Sinhak Gangui 2* (Lecture of Theology for the Young Generation 2), 13-8.

Lee also understands the interconnected relationship between God, human being, and nature through the dynamic communication. That is, human beings may experience the connectivity of everything and God whenever the communication is practiced. From the very beginning, God provides all things the right to be or live according to their original nature or instinct. Therefore, no-one has the right to restrain or destroy their original nature, and also it is wrong to separate them from their own nature. Lee's expression of the natural way or natural law is, therefore, always interpreted in this light.⁵⁹³ He believes that only humanity, who has the image of God, is able to break the relationship by abusing their free will. Therefore, if there were no interference by human beings, nature would never abandon its divinity on its own accord.

In conclusion, Lee reveals his eco-theological characteristics through the understanding of incarnation, the masterhood of Jesus, and communication. These characteristics prove that all existences in the cosmos are interconnected. Cosmic incarnation means that everything has the divine nature as part of God, and God and creatures are inseparable. Jesus Christ is not only Mediator, Redeemer, and Son of God, who save us from sin, but also the Master who teaches the true lifestyle through his obedience. The dynamic communication is also an example showing the interconnected relationship between humanity and the natural things as well as between humanity and God. Therefore, in this understanding it is natural for a Christian to refuse all kinds of discrimination imposed by various physical, social, economic, and political pressures in human society, and the exploitation of nature caused by anthropocentric life style. It is obvious that these theological themes would be significant points on the agenda of eco-theology.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹³ See the web site, <http://www.peacenet.or.kr/~kcems/99spirism/lee-gine.htm>. From an online article entitled, *Saengtaejeok Yeongseong* (생태적 영성, Ecological Spirituality), by Hunju Lee, dated on Dec 10, 2002.

⁵⁹⁴ See Jaesun Park, *Hanguk Saemyeong Sinhak ui Mosaek* (한국생명신학의 모색, Reflection on Korean Life Theology), (Seoul: Hanguksinhak Institute, 2000), 41-61; Also see Jeongbae Lee, *Jojiksinhak eroseoui Hangukjeok Saemyeong Sinhak* (조직신학으로서의 한국적 생명신학, Korean Life Theology as Systematic Theology), (Seoul: Gamsin, 1996).

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, we examined Lee's ecological theology through his understanding of the relationship. His personal difficulties through deaths of his father, brother and mother, poverty, disease, etc., made him realise the meanings of life and death, and led him to religious experiences which became the base of his ecological theology. His seminary life and pastoral experiences matured him in theology and knowledge. His ecological theology was shaped in these backgrounds. Lee's understanding of the relationship between God, human being, and nature has been based on the inseparable triune relationship in the concepts of theocentric kinship, cosmic incarnation, and spirituality.

Lee is one of a few people who show ecological theory and practice in the Christianity of Korea. His disciplined practice and many writings provide a way of ecological Christian lifestyle to overcome the lifestyle influenced by globalisation, industrial civilisation and the unlimited expansion of capital, technology and industry. His experience of spiritual communication is an authentic example of cultivating friendship between humanity and nature. As harmonising selected ideas in Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc. Lee developed his ecological theology in the light of Christianity. The original way of nature and the natural law of Taoism, the self-emptiness of Buddhism, the cultivation and discipline of the self of Confucianism, and the theocentric spirituality of Christianity characterise his unique theology.

Lee's ecological theology is mainly based on the understanding of Whole One God (웅근하나) who exists in everything as an incarnated form, and nothing can be out of his presence. All things are part of the kinship, the family of God, and everything has physical and spiritual connections simultaneously. Both the physical and the spiritual speak of the incarnate God, and the inseparable relationship between God, humanity, and nature. Dynamic communication with the natural things becomes an example of Christian spirituality. Nature as part of God has divine nature which makes communication with others possible. The disconnection of the communication would be, therefore, the state of sin and death in Lee's understanding, and Jesus Christ is the

Redeemer who recovered the communicative relationship through his saving act.

Furthermore, Jesus is the master; his continuous obedience unto death and his lifestyle are the perfect model to follow.

Although there are some theological aspects to be thoroughly examined and still to be developed in Lee's understanding of the relationship between God, human beings and nature, it is true that his ecological theology shows a unique position in Korean Christianity as reinterpreting Christian theological themes in a multi-religious context.

**PART THREE: ASSESSMENT OF THE THREE
THINKERS' ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY**

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ASSESSMENT OF THE UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ULTIMATE REALITY (GOD), HUMAN BEING, AND NATURE

1. Introduction

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 analysed Chiha Kim's, Pomnyun's, and Hyunju Lee's understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity and nature. Although their ecological theologies developed on the basis of different religious backgrounds, their main argument was that there is an inseparable relationship between ultimate reality (God), humans and nature. The three thinkers described the inseparable relationship through the concepts of 'Life', 'Dependent Origination', 'Incarnation', and these three concepts became the key to understand their ecological theology. In the final part of the thesis I will assess their ecological theology, and try to articulate the common grounds or direction of Korean ecological theology.

In the first section of part B, I will clarify the concepts of ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature according to the three thinkers. Although these concepts are not individually articulated in their writings, through the examination of these concepts we can more explicitly distinguish the commonalities and differences of their ecological theology. As the next step in this section, I will finally draw out the common ground, which the three thinkers' ecological theologies share in the understanding of the relationship of ultimate reality (God), humans, and nature. The common ground has three elements such as holistic dynamism, organic interconnectedness, and harmonised spirituality. These three elements have been commonly revealed in their ecological theologies, although they also involve a different standpoint or emphasis at the same time. These elements would be the typical characteristics of Korean ecological theology in the multi-religious context.

The second main section of this part will serve as the conclusion. I will summarise the common ground of the three thinkers' ecological theology. It will be summarised as 'the way of dynamic triune relationship', which means that ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature have the triune relationship as their original nature and all three of them can be properly understood in this triune relationship. The triune relationship is deeply related to the thought of '*Cheon-Ji-In-Hapil* (天地人合一, the unity of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity)' in the multi-religious context of Korea. I will propose that the understanding of the unity of ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature is the key of Korean ecological theology.

In this chapter I will look at the commonalities and differences in the concepts of ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature, and the common ground in the three thinkers' understandings of the relationship.

2. The Concepts of Ultimate Reality, Human Beings, and Nature

In this section I will look at commonalities and differences of the three thinkers' understandings of ultimate reality (God), human beings, and nature, and will attempt to demonstrate the common ground of their ecological theologies. The three thinkers use the terms, ultimate reality (God), human beings, at various points in their writings, particularly the concept of God. The term, 'God', has been expressed as 'ultimate reality', 'ultimate being', 'Hanulnim', etc. However, I will try to avoid confusion as much as possible here as using 'ultimate reality'.

2.1. Ultimate Reality (God)

This part will clarify the three thinker's concepts of ultimate reality (God) through three classifications: definition of the ultimate being, type of action, and inseparableness (immanence). The term 'God' in Christianity is mainly conceived as 'the Creator', 'the Almighty', or 'the Ultimate Being' who created the universe and governs it as a transcendent and immanent being. Moreover, God is also described as a personal being,

possessing knowledge, wisdom, emotion, will, etc., similar to the nature of human beings. However, before Christianity was introduced into Korea, there had already been different concepts about the ultimate being: Spirit in Shamanism, *Ki* (氣, Ultimate Energy) in Taoism and *Ki* Philosophy, *Li* (理, Ultimate Principle) and Heaven in Confucianism, Dependent Origination in Buddhism, *Hanulnim* (하늘님, the Lord of Heaven) in Donghak, etc. The three thinkers' concepts of ultimate reality (God) reveal a syncretistic recognition including other religious understandings upon their own religious bases.

Chiha Kim understands the ultimate being through the concepts of '*Jiki* (至氣 The Utmost *Ki*)', *Hanulnim*, and life. *Jiki* is the fundamental source of all existences having both internal spirit (principle or power) and the external form. The internal spirit leads all things' generation, change, movement, etc., and the external formation shows forms, shapes, structures, etc. *Jiki* in the holistic understanding is the invisible power and the visible form, and is conceived as the ultimate being by Kim. In this understanding, Kim developed the ultimate being '*Jiki*' into 'life', 'endless generating', 'process', or 'change' as a dynamic action rather than a being. Kim describes it as '*Hanulnim*' who is the Lord of Heaven in Korean understanding, and draws the meanings of holiness and eternality from it. *Hanulnim* is impersonal; it exists in all things including human beings and non-human beings as the original nature of them. *Hanulnim* himself is life, and is immanent in all activities of the cosmos, and these activities are holy and eternal. Kim conceives 'life' as the cosmic activity or generation, which continues to move and change in everything. In other words, daily lives of human beings and all natural activities of non-human beings are conceived as 'life' and '*Hanulnim*' which is the ultimate reality. The ultimate being is philosophically *Jiki*, religiously *Hanulnim*, dynamically life.

In relation to the type of action, Kim claims that the direction of all life activities is *Salim* (living) or the creative evolution, which is towards self-systemisation and order of formation in harmony and balance with others' activities. *Jugim* (killing), which means

destruction, isolation, or distortion by any artificial force, is not the activity of life.⁵⁹⁵ In other words, not all activities are conceived as good, but only those, which are in the process of the original nature (life). Moreover, these activities of life do not derive from the ultimate being, rather the actions themselves are the ultimate reality. All beings were generated from the ultimate reality. Therefore, life is the origin of the generation of the universe, and it goes toward a creative evolution, self-systemisation, and an order of formations in Kim's understanding. All beings and activities cannot be understood as dualism because that would imply separateness, but are conceived as external and internal natures of the one cosmic life, which is *Jiki* and *Hanulnim* as the immanent ultimate reality

Hyunju Lee understands God as a creator, but he is an inclusive God. He claims that God cannot be confined to any religion, culture, people, generation, the universe, etc. rather God as a supernatural being includes all these realities. In this sense, God as a creator is a transcendent being who cannot be limited to any reality, but it does not mean that God exists outside of any realities. Rather, in Lee's understanding, God is present in all the different religions, cultures, peoples, and realities as an immanent being.⁵⁹⁶ Therefore, Lee says that various religions, cultures, and generations can differently express the concept of God, but no religion has a complete understanding of God. On this basis, Lee understands that all religions have commonalities and differences. This inclusive understanding of God is revealed more clearly in Lee's understanding of incarnation. He says that Jesus is not the only incarnation of God but one of the many divine incarnations throughout history. Nevertheless, he is the most perfect model of incarnation. Incarnation means God's direct manifestation and embodiment through all realities in time and space.⁵⁹⁷ God is present in everything through incarnation, everything has the divine nature as their original nature. Lee believes that the original nature of all things as the divine nature is holy, and everything has spirituality in order to communicate with each other because of the divine nature existing in them.

⁵⁹⁵ See chapter 2.

⁵⁹⁶ See chapter four.

⁵⁹⁷ See chapter four.

Lee's understanding of the divine action is revealed in the concept of *Judong* which means to lead someone from inside. God is not outside the world but within the world, and he does not interfere in the world from outside but from within the world side by side. God participates in all realities in the world. However, it does not mean that God's participation in the world is unconditional. Although God as the creator is supernatural and transcendental in terms of his attributes, he limits himself to the original nature of all existences. That is, God only participates in the world through the original nature which exists in everything, and any activity outside of the original nature must be evil. In this understanding, Lee distinguishes between good and evil. Therefore, the meaning of Christian faith is to redeem the original nature, which is lost by sin, through following the perfect lifestyle of Jesus Christ. The ultimate participation in the incarnated nature becomes the indispensable condition of the perfect lifestyle of all existences. Lee describes this participation as communication or spirituality, through which the unity of the creator and the creation may be achieved, the original and the derived existences: God and the world.

Pomnyun has a different view of the ultimate being. Pomnyun denies all supernatural beings that create, rule, and guide the universe, and says that there is only 'the Dependent Origination (연기)' as the ultimate reality. It does not have an ultimate power but is an endless reality. Moreover, the Dependent Origination is not conceived as an ultimate being but as an ultimate connectivity or mutual connectedness of all realities. There is no transcendent being in the universe; there is only continuous change by the immanent cause. As this immanent cause is originated in the Dependent Origination, there is only absolute interconnectedness. Although Pomnyun views the cosmos as an atheist, he claims that the Dependent Origination is the ultimate reality which is absolute and eternal. Pomnyun understands that all visible entities originate in the Dependent Origination and are not fixed substances but only temporal phenomena or changeable forms. Cause, condition and effect in the Dependent Origination are real, and all realities are changed by the principle of cause, effect, and condition. In this view, nothingness (formlessness) or emptiness (selflessness) of all beings is conceived, the

real being is the endless connectivity.

The type of action of the ultimate connectivity reveals as *Seong-Joo-Goi-Gong* (成住壞空, Originating-Staying-Collapsing-Emptying), *Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死, Birth-Ageing-Sickenning-Death), and *Saeng-Joo-Lee-Myeol* (生住移滅, Appearing-Staying-Moving-Disappearing) according to the evolutionary degree of material and spirit (or mind). These activities are the process of change. The continuous change is the real reality in the cosmos, and other existences as the temporal phenomena are virtual images in Pomnyun's understanding. Therefore, cause, condition, and effect are the significant elements of the dependent origination. All kinds of beings and actions are aggregated forms of cause, condition, and effect which derive from the ultimate connectivity by the dependent origination. However, the connectivity is not represented by a straight line, but by a circle. There is no beginning and end but only circulation in the cosmos as the cosmos continuously changes.

In sum, the concepts of ultimate reality (God) are conceived as the ultimate life (origination) in Kim's understanding, as the ultimate being in Lee's, and as the ultimate connectivity in Pomnyun's thought. The difference between Kim, Lee, and Pomnyun is that Kim and Pomnyun deny the existence of a transcendental reality except Lee who maintains that God is a creator of all that creates all things, religions, cultures, etc. However, the transcendent God through incarnation is immanent in all creation as the original nature of all things. Nevertheless, their commonalities include the emphasis on the inseparable connection between the ultimate reality and everything else in the cosmos and the continuous activity of the ultimate reality. All three thinkers emphasise the ultimate reality's inseparable connection to the world, and see that everything is part of the ultimate reality. That is, the ultimate being (or reality) does not simply act, lead, or govern the world from outside the cosmos, but is the fundamental origin of the world. In this view, the world is conceived as a part or a nature of the ultimate reality. Moreover, this connection between the ultimate reality and the world is not based on the ontological understanding, rather is conceived in dynamism of action. The activity of

life by Kim, the interconnectedness by Pomnyun, and the incarnated nature by Lee show the dynamic attributes of the ultimate being (reality), in this dynamic activity there is no any borderline between ultimate reality (God) and the world. Although the ultimate reality (God) is not accessible to be understood in terms of a whole figure, but the world shares part of the nature of the immanent ultimate reality.

In relation to the type of action of the ultimate reality (or being), they describe it 'life', 'love', and 'change'. For Kim, life is the cosmic activity including everything, is going towards a self-systemisation in harmony and balance. According to Lee, love is the given nature, and everything is a relational being united in God. Therefore, to live according to the divine nature means to communicate with God. Pomnyun says that there is only change in the universe by cause, effect and condition in the ultimate connectivity (the Dependent Origination). And the process of change continuously proceeds in a great circle. Lee's God is personal, Pomnyun's is impersonal, and Kim seems to occupy a middle ground.

There is no doubt that all the three thinkers emphasise the inseparableness of the ultimate reality (or being) and the natural world. In Lee's theistic understanding, the actual world is the incarnation of the transcendent reality of God. Kim understands that the world has been constituted by the internal spirit and the external form which is *Jiki*. This external reality and internal spirit (principle or power) are led by the cosmic action of life. Life as the ultimate reality leads every beings and actions and is always present in the actual reality. Pomnyun views that the actual reality is moving and changing in the interconnectedness without any intervening of any principle or internal or external power which may be a transcendental being, and all phenomena are produced by cause, effect and condition in the ultimate connectivity.

Conclusively, although Kim has a panentheistic view of the ultimate reality (God) as the ultimate activity, Lee has a theistic view of God as the ultimate being, and Pomnyun has an atheistic view of God as the ultimate cause, they all insist that the actual being or

reality cannot be separated from the world, the ultimate reality (or being) is present in the world as ‘the fundamental life’, ‘the continuous change’, and ‘the original nature’ rather than a transcendental being.

2.2. Human Beings

Kim, Pomnyun, and Lee regard humanity as part of nature and part of the ultimate being (or reality). They do not grant humanity a privileged status over the natural world or describe humans as independent individuals separated from other existences. Their distinctness from the natural world lies in their capability of ethical responsibility.

In Kim’s understanding, human beings who have the internal principle (or spirit) and the external body are cosmic life. He says that “human being is a cosmic life itself, and is a self-conscious living entity that possesses a holy eternal cosmic life,” and “the cosmic life is continuously generated in human beings.”⁵⁹⁸ Cosmic life here means the total activity of the cosmos. Kim sees human beings as the most obvious form of the cosmic life. Kim does not see human beings as a closed or limited beings that merely reproduce an activity of life, but as an open reality that is directly connected to the cosmic life as a part of the cosmic life. Although human beings have a physical body in the process of the cosmic life activities, it is originally an activity of life. In this view, human beings are not merely individual independent beings, but cosmic lives that are manifest in time and space. Among all realities, human beings are the best expressed life and the most self-conscious living beings of the cosmic life.⁵⁹⁹ Although all things are part of the total cosmic life, human beings present the most advanced shape of the cosmic life. In this view, Kim recognises that human beings are the most spiritual and self-conscious beings; therefore they have an ethical responsibility or duty to participate in the creative activities of life, as they are able to recognise the cosmic life much more than others. On this basis, Kim distinguishes human beings and other existences, but they are fundamentally part of the same life community in the cosmic life. Kim

⁵⁹⁸ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy), 155.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 152-3.

emphasises that this distinction is solely based on an ethical responsibility which indicates a positive and voluntary participation to the cosmic life as *Mosim* (serving) in every area, and a co-operation with the cosmic life in the natural world.⁶⁰⁰ It is the fundamental nature of human beings, which was originally inherited, should be served, followed, so they take part in *Salim* (living). One of the difficulties that arise from Kim's arguments is the existence of evil. He explains that evil is not to participate in the original nature of humans towards 'harmonisation', 'order', 'self-systemisation', or 'mutual living', and is to interrupt the way of life by any artificial activity. However, heavy damage by a great natural disaster or a benefit caused by human technology or an advanced science, is not properly understood in the way of cosmic life, because the natural way is good and any other artificial one is bad in his understanding. He tries to understand all realities through *Bulyeongiyeon* (不然基然, Yes and No), which all things have both sides of positive and negative simultaneously as the mode of the activity of life.⁶⁰¹ Probably it is not easy to understand a contradicting activity which may happen between individual beings in the commotion of life. Nevertheless, human beings cannot be separated from the cosmic life and all things, and they have more ethical responsibility to sustain in cosmic life than any other life forms.

Pomnyun understands human beings as the highest aggregated beings in terms of physical and spiritual evolution by the continuous change. The human body is *Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* (生老病死, Birth-Ageing-Sickening-Death) and the mind is *Saeng-Joo-Lee-Myeol* (生住移滅, Appearing-Staying-Moving-Disappearing).⁶⁰² That is, human being as the visible substance is not real, but it is constituted by these elements in the process of change. The processes are formless and are constituted by cause, condition, and effect. Therefore, Buddhism says that all things are formless (諸行無常, *sarva samskāra anitya*). The unstoppable formless change of the body and the mind through *Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa* and *Saeng-Joo-Lee-Myeol* is the reality of human being. In this view, the body and the mind of human beings cannot be conceived from a fixed

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 152.

⁶⁰¹ See chapter 2.

⁶⁰² See chapter 3.

perspective, and should be originally seen in the process of continuous change. A fixed thinking, which simply focuses on a visible form, causes bias, and produces a fixed self or form which is not real. There is only the interconnectedness by the Dependent Origination, and there is no a fixed self or form though it temporally occurs by the interconnected cause, condition, and effect in time and space. Therefore, human beings and nature are completely inseparable in the interconnected relationship. The difference of human being and the natural world lies in the complexity of this interconnected relationship, and human beings as the most complicated aggregation in terms of physics and psyche can achieve awakening as its ethics through cultivating, meditating, and ascetic practice. That is, the highest level of ethics is to understand the truth of the Dependent Origination. In this view, evil is understood as behaviours away from awakening to this truth in ignorance, but it is not clear whether evil can be out of control in the interconnected relationship. Nevertheless, human beings are inseparable from the natural world in the interconnected relationship of all things, and it is that human beings can never be independently alone in the mode of change and the interconnectedness.

Hyunju Lee understands humans as beings created in the image of God.⁶⁰³ The image of God indicates a conductional analogy with God as the internal nature of human being. The meaning of the divine image denotes a participation in love as God showed in his creation. Although human beings and other creatures that were derived from the same source, God, cannot be distinguished in terms of dignity or ontological value, human beings having the divine image have the power of love to participate in the divine work as a co-operator. In this view, Lee understands the ethics of human beings. Therefore, human beings simply not 'to be' but 'ought to be' as the fundamental nature. Lee also believes that the divine image implies 'a need to be needed' as the meaning of love.⁶⁰⁴ That is, human beings can only be fulfilled and satisfied in a life dedicated to the needs of others. As the indispensable conditions, the participation in the divine work and the love for others are the ethical duties and the purpose of humans' life in Lee's

⁶⁰³ See chapter 4.

⁶⁰⁴ See chapter 4.

understanding. Lee sees the difference between human beings and the non-human world through humans' capability to voluntarily sacrifice themselves for others. This capability to sacrifice his/herself for others corresponds to the image of God which was granted to human beings. Lee understands that human beings ontologically derive from God together with the natural world, and have a common ground with God and the natural world. However, because human beings and nature were differently granted ethical capability, human beings have more responsibility and love than the natural world. Moreover, the image of God means that human beings have a communicable nature with God as part of their original nature. It, thus, indicates that, without proper communication with God, human beings cannot remain true human beings. In this understanding, human beings are also inseparable from God.

Although Kim, Pomnyun, and Lee understand the origin of human beings in different terms, they have commonalities in other aspects. They all recognise that human beings are not separated from the ultimate reality (God) and from the natural world ontologically. Human beings share the original nature with other existences physically, mentally, or ethically. In particular, they all emphasise the ethical responsibility of human beings because they are the nearest reality to the ultimate one. Human being, as best representations of cosmic life, or the most complicated body and mind, or created in the divine image, also implies a unique nature which is different from the natural world on the one hand, and on the other hand human beings are the part of nature because their origin is the same.

Regarding ethics, Kim conceives that human beings having cosmic life should spontaneously achieve the stream of generating life through continuous creative activities with other realities. The evolutionary life through the complexity of consciousness (內有神靈) and diversity of external forms (外有氣化) is towards self-systemisation and formation of order. To serve (or participate in) these activities of life is the ethical duty of human beings.⁶⁰⁵ Kim emphasises a 'horizontal relationship' and

⁶⁰⁵ See chapter 2.

‘co-operation’ with other existences including non-living things, which also have life activities.⁶⁰⁶ Consequently, all natural activities related to life are emphasised, and any artificial activities, which might obstruct the natural activities, are conceived as *Jugim* (evil or killing). Therefore, the most ethical life is the natural life in the stream of life for Kim. Lee also emphasises the original nature of human being though it was given by God as the divine image. The most ethical life is to follow the divine image, because it is capable of love and communication. This divine nature requires humans to love others, to communicate with God, and to participate in the work of God. To do so, he suggests, one should make one’s mind empty and rediscover their original nature. Additionally, Lee believes that the natural world is capable of communicating and humans can approach them as brothers and sisters in the one cosmic father, God. At the same time, Pomnyun insists that human beings are formless, and every reality is nothingness, because all things are temporal phenomena in the process of change. Awakening to this naturally leads people to ascetic practice. Suffering stems from an attachment to a fixed self image, and he calls this state ‘*Muji* (無知, the ignorance)’. Therefore, human beings can only reach peace and salvation once he escaped from the attachment to the fixed self image, and he calls it ‘*Hwaetal* (解脫, the deliverance)’. The practice of self-discipline is the most significant element for human beings, and the highest goal of human beings is to realise the eternal interconnected oneness of all existences in reality. In this view, to kill any form of life is strictly prohibited as the fundamental Buddhist commandment.

In sum, human beings are conceived as the most positive evidence of the cosmic life according to Kim, the most complicated aggregation of the eternal interconnectedness according to Pomnyun, and the manifestation of the divine image according to Lee. They all insist on a high standard of ethics through participation, self-discipline, and practicing love, because human beings are originally connected to the ultimate being (reality).

⁶⁰⁶ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy), 191.

2.3 Nature

The three thinkers do not agree that nature is not different from human beings in terms of its origin. Moreover, it is conceived that nature has a dynamic relationship within the ultimate reality as human beings do have.

Chiha Kim's cosmology starts by denying both the creation theory according to which all existences were created by a transcendent God, and the materialistic evolution. Rather he insists on the 'in' and 'out' of all existences, because he sees the generation of the universe in the activity of *Jiki*. He thinks that the distinction between above and below is a product of dualism which is the separation of spirit and material.⁶⁰⁷ The universe itself is the wholeness of life, which consists of materials (external) and spirit (internal). Everything is an expression of the cosmic life, and the cosmic life simultaneously acts 'in' and 'out' of all existences. In Kim's argument, the universe is time, space, place, phenomenon, materials and activity of life, and is intertwined by a complicated relation of in and out of all existences. Therefore, there is not only the visible world but also the spiritual world in the cosmos as the phenomena of life.⁶⁰⁸ In this view, nature itself is conceived as a living organic entity of life, and human beings are the best expressed life form of the natural world. All existences of the natural world including human beings continuously interact with each other in the organic relationship of life. Therefore, all things are connected in the wholeness of life, and must be interdependent, even though they independently and diversely express the mode of life. Kim's understanding of nature is based on this total organic relationship of life, and everything in the cosmos is a life form. In this monistic understanding of life, Kim denies any kind of centrism such as anthropocentric, biocentric, or theocentric views, because he sees the universe as the one cosmic life.

Pomnyun has a more radical view about the natural world than the other two thinkers. He insists that the natural world is equal to human beings except for human complexity

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁶⁰⁸ See chapter 2.

of the body and mind. He conceives that everything in the universe is a product, which was aggregated by cause, condition, and effect, and if one tries to trace something back to its beginning only Dependent Origination remains and every form disappears.⁶⁰⁹

Everything is a compound being which consists of more fundamental elements.

Therefore, the universe is fundamentally formless and selfless, and eventually remains the ultimate connectivity. According to the degree of the interconnected relationship of cause, condition, and effect, the complexity of entities is decided and their physical forms and mental phenomena are revealed. Nature and human beings were formed by this interconnected relationship. All things in this process continue to interact with one another and nothing can exist alone. In this mode of change by the web of the interconnected relationship, Pomnyun sees the universe as one, and in this respect he has the same view as Kim who insists that the whole universe is one cosmic life.

Pomnyun also understands the mental phenomena as a product the degree of complexity, and he sees that all things have different degrees of mental phenomena according to the complexity of their connectedness.⁶¹⁰ Everything is part of the continuous change of the universe and the manifestation of the ultimate interconnectedness. In this view, freedom and independence of the natural world must be limited by its interconnectedness. Therefore, nature including human beings is a temporal, limited, and changeable manifestation of the eternal interconnectedness.

Lee understands nature in incarnation, because nature was originated from God and itself is the divine embodiment by incarnation. In fact, Lee conceives the creation and the incarnation as the almost same meaning, because he sees that the term ‘creation’ is emphasised in the viewpoint of the transcendent God and ‘incarnation’ is based on the one of the immanent God in terms of the revelation of God. Moreover, he thinks that the understanding of the transcendent God is mainly present in the Western Christian history, and the world as the incarnation is not properly considered in the concept of the

⁶⁰⁹ See chapter 3.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

immanent God.⁶¹¹ God as the transcendent being did not only create the world, but also he as the immanent being dwells within it. Nature is an external form of the divine nature, and everything in the universe is *the* something of a divine nature. He sees nature as mysterious, because its Creator is mysterious. In this way, nature reveals God's mysterious and divine nature. Moreover, he understands creation as the first incarnation of God, and nature itself is conceived as the direct bodily manifestation of God.⁶¹² Therefore, nature is capable to communicate with human beings and God, because it shares the same divine nature. In this view, talking to nature is a spiritual experience. God's mysterious work includes not only human history but also the natural world, and the natural world also has an independent relation to God somehow in their own communication. At this point, we might wish to criticise Lee's argument for being pantheistic, however we must take into account that Lee also claims that nature is only part of God. In the incarnate world, everything including human beings and non-human beings share the divine nature, and are brothers and sisters united in the one cosmic Father God. Therefore, he sees that everything is inseparable in this kinship and the spiritual relationship by the divine nature. This understanding shows a strong connectivity to the original source which is God, that individual entities are closely interconnected by God.

In relation to freedom and independence of nature, Kim, Pomnyun and Lee emphasise the close connectivity of all realities that sustain their existence. The scope of individual freedom and independence are defined in this interconnectedness. All realities in the universe do not exist independently, and it is impossible to separately exist from other realities. Everything is closely related to the ultimate reality, and directly reveals the original nature of the ultimate reality as life (Kim), interconnectedness (Pomnyun), and divine nature (Lee). It means that the existence of the natural world is not accidental that there is an obvious order, direction, or autonomy by its original nature. Although this direction, order or autonomy is conceived differently: 'self-systematisation' (Kim),

⁶¹¹ Hyunju Lee, *Na ui Eomeoni Na ui Kyohoeoyo* (My Mother My Church), 46-51.

⁶¹² See chapter 4.

‘mutual existence’ (Pomnyun), and ‘self-so-ness’ (Lee), they all point toward harmony in a communion with all realities. All three thinkers see nature/the cosmos as one organism, and human beings together with other entities are part of it. Additionally, they also agree that everything is continuously moving and changing without recess. Therefore, nature is dynamic and diverse. Natural death means to return to the original source or to be renewed in a different form. Everything that stops this movement of change is considered killing, whereas natural diseases or death does not constitute evil.⁶¹³ On this basis, freedom and independence of all entities are relational but not individual.

In fact, it is believed that the inseparable relationship of all realities including the ultimate reality, human being, and nature may cause a problem to understand evil and natural disasters in reality, because everything is relational and it means that the ultimate reality (God) allows these things to happen. However, the three thinkers have no problem to define ‘evil’ though there is something to be judged. Kim says *Jugim* (killing) is evil that is all kinds of arbitrary behaviour to obstruct or distort the action of life. Pomnyun thinks that clinging on things as real or fixed is evil, and Lee points out that evil is not to follow the given divine nature. They all point out that evil is individualistic behaviour breaking the original relatedness of all realities, because they recognise that individualistic view is ignorant of the universal relationship of all things. The nature of the natural world is ontologically relational, but the given nature is achieved by activity or conduct.⁶¹⁴ In other words, all creatures ontologically have the notion of the relational nature as their original nature, but to conduct this given nature depends on the one’s will or decision. Particularly, this is the case with regard to human beings, and ethical responsibility is emphasised in this view. Therefore, the ontological nature as a relational being and the conductional nature as an independent will are distinguished, which allows a space to understand evil. In this view, they accept negative activities of the natural world as natural in the understanding of the dynamic life activities by Kim, the total process of change by Pomnyun, and the original nature

⁶¹³ See Hyunju Lee, *Geuraeseo Haengbokhan Sin ui Jakeun Piri* (As Happy, A Little Flute of God), 256-64.

⁶¹⁴ See chapter 4.

by Lee.

Although the three thinkers have different views on the origin of nature such as *Jiki* (Kim), the Dependent Origination (Pomnyun), and God (Lee), they all agree that all entities are interconnected. As nature is part of life (Kim), part of interconnectedness (Pomnyun); and divine nature (Lee) is inseparable from the ultimate reality and continues to interact with the ultimate reality. Nature is the manifestation of continuous dynamism by life (Kim), change (Pomnyun), and love (Lee). In this sense, the three thinkers maintain the holiness (*Hanulnim*), equality (interconnectedness), and dignity (divine nature) of nature.

3. The Common Elements in the Three Thinkers' Understandings of the Relationship between Ultimate Reality, and Human Being, and Nature

Although the three thinkers' understandings of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature have different views according to their religious standpoints, they have obvious common elements in their understanding of the relationship. In this section, I will examine these common elements in order to clarify the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humans and nature because it will help us to understand what the characteristics of Korean ecological theology are on the basis of the common grounds before we finally aim to find a foundation and direction for Korean ecological theology. Undoubtedly, the inseparable relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings and nature is a crucial element in the understanding of ecological theology, and most ecologists emphasise this close relationship. However, the inseparable relationship is differently described according to scholars' standpoints, and their interpretations and emphases are also different. Nevertheless, they share common elements in their understandings of the inseparable relationship. Therefore, this section, as narrowing down the focus, will examine the common elements: holistic dynamism, organic interconnectedness, and harmonised spirituality. It will provide us a crucial hint to grasp how the contemporary Korean ecological theology has been shaped. I will

propose that these three elements play the core role in the three thinkers' ecological theology, and imply the basic theories of Korean ecological theology in the multi-religious context.

3.1. Holistic Dynamism (Activity)

The first common element in the three thinkers' understanding of the inseparable relationship between ultimate reality (God), human beings, and nature is holistic dynamism. That is, the cosmologies of the three thinkers are primarily based on holistic dynamism rather than on individual particularity. The essence of the cosmos is holistic dynamism, and individual uniqueness or diversity is conceived as the tangible expression of cosmic dynamism. In other words, the holistic dynamism is the fundamental and common nature of the cosmos, and all things are various expressions of the dynamism. In sum, holistic dynamism is prior to individual particularity.

In this view, the cosmos is full of dynamism, and all things in the cosmos are various forms of the holistic dynamism. Holistic dynamism is the one cosmic activity each existence participates in. In this respect, all things are connected and united as one in the holistic dynamism. Therefore, the inseparable relationship between ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature is based on dynamic activity rather than a physical body. Although all things have ontologically different forms, they are different expressions of the cosmic dynamism. Chiha Kim describes it through the understanding of the cosmic life, Pomnyun implies it in the explanation of the mode of change, and Hyunju Lee implies it in the understanding of the divine incarnation. Therefore, the concepts of 'life', 'change' and 'incarnation' do not allow dividing the ultimate being and the cosmos into two different realities, and emphasise unity in the view of the holistic dynamism.

However, as I pointed out before, the holistic understanding of the relationship has been argued in the concepts of immanence versus transcendence, homogeneity versus absolute otherness, monism versus dualism, pantheism versus deism, etc. The holistic

view of the cosmos emphasises the unity and oneness of all existences as a totalistic concept. This viewpoint appears in Western scholars' thought as a feature of the adoption of the Gaia hypothesis by deep ecologists such as Arne Naess and ecotheologians such as Matthew Fox. Naess argues that a central cause of the modern problem with nature is the atomistic conception of self, which predominates in Western philosophy, and proposes a relational self-realisation that extends the self to the whole of nature.⁶¹⁵ Fox, through his famous 'creation spirituality' also criticises theology, which is dominated by the dualistic theory of 'fall/ redemption' since Augustine, for leading to the modern ecological problems, and proposes 'original blessing' which focuses on the embodied original goodness of the creation according to the panentheistic view. There are also other scholars who have a holistic view of the cosmos such as process philosophers, Alfred North Whitehead, John B. Cobb, etc. They propose that human beings and the natural world are one and are parts of evolutionary process or history, and the process of being in becoming is the intrinsic value of all existences.⁶¹⁶ This holistic or monistic view of the cosmos emphasising the homogeneous relationship, however, exposes problems in the understandings of particularity and diversity of individual beings, and distinctiveness of human cultures and religions in time and space as Michael S. Northcott points out.⁶¹⁷ Northcott criticises a mystical unity that may not encourage the love and care of particular parts or individuals of the physical world for being homogenising and totalising.⁶¹⁸ The holistic view consequently does not provide an understandable space for the uniqueness and transcendence of God in the tradition of Christianity, and the particularity of creation even though individualistic or atomic view of the cosmos entails many problems, too. Therefore, arguments between these two sides are inevitable and it is indispensable factors in order to find a proper direction which ecological theology should take in the future.

The holistic dynamism is not merely totalising or homogenising all things of the cosmos.

⁶¹⁵ Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 85.

⁶¹⁶ See Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Macmillan, 1929), John B. Cobb, *Is it Too Late? A Theology of Ecology*, (Beverly Hills, CA: Bruce, 1972).

⁶¹⁷ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment & Christian Ethics*, 113.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

Particularity and diversity are understood in dynamism even though it emphasises unity and oneness of all things. In other words, the cosmos exists in the one united dynamism though each thing has individual uniqueness. Kim conceives the one united dynamism as ‘the cosmic life’, Pomnyun as ‘the continuous change’, and Lee as ‘the divine nature’.⁶¹⁹ Therefore, individual particularity and diversity are understood in the holistic dynamism rather than in an independent individualism. In this respect, everything is a unique expression of dynamism such as ‘life’, ‘change’, and ‘love’. The cosmos is, consequently, conceived not as an assembly of beings but dynamism, and individual entities that express uniqueness and diversity of dynamism in time and space.

The ontological understanding of the cosmos may easily lead to dualism which separates principle and formation, reason and material, spirit and body, or on the contrary to monism uniting them without any distinction. The dualistic understanding based on ontology was demonstrated by late mediaeval scientists such as N. Kopernikus (1473-1543), J. Kepler (1571-1630), G. Galilei (1564-1642), F. Bacon (1561-1626), I. Newton (1642-1727), etc. Particularly, R. Descartes (1596-1650) explicitly and dualistically revealed mind and body, and emphasised the subjectivity of mind over body.⁶²⁰ God, principle, reason, or mind was analytically separated from body, and body and the physical world were mechanistically and mathematically treated. Consequently, natural science was separated from theology. This kind of tradition is present in Korea and it was put forward by Confucianism. People called it ‘*Liki* (理氣, Principle and Material Force) theory’.⁶²¹ Neo-Confucianism in Korea generally understands the universe as the unity of *Li* (the ultimate principle) and *Ki* (the material force). They argued whether these two natures can distinguishably exist in reality or humanity. Hwang Lee (1501-1570) claims that they dualistically exist in reality and *Li* is prior to *Ki*, and human beings ought to follow the heavenly principle (*Li*) rather than *Ki*.

⁶¹⁹ See chapter 2, 3, 4.

⁶²⁰ See D. Pepper, *Modern environmentalism: introduction*, (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1989), by Myeongwu Lee, etc., trans., 96.

⁶²¹ The argument of *Liki* (理氣, Principle and Material Force) theory was between two Korean Confucian scholars, Hwang Lee (○| 황, 1501-1570) and Yi Lee (○| |, 1536-1584).

However, Yi Lee (1536-1584) insisted that the universe is not the mere unity of *Li* and *Ki*. That is, *Li* as the principle or reason is in *Ki*, and all realities originate in this *Ki*.⁶²² In other words, *Li* is in *Ki* as the principle, all realities originate in it and all phenomena are the external form of *Ki*. Yi Lee through the understanding of *Ki* unites principle and all existences. In this understanding, one of the very interesting points is that there are three different realities in the universe rather than two. *Li* might be conceived as the metaphysical reality, materials of this world are the physical reality, and *Ki* is the united reality. As the third reality, which is *Ki*, is the united reality, it might provide a hint to overcome dualistic and monistic understanding of the universe.

Kim made use of the above concept and developed it into the concept of '*Jiki*'. Pomnyun's and Lee's ideas are variations on the concept of *Liki*. In the case of Pomnyun, the Dependent Origination is the metaphysical reality, and the compound world is the physical reality. The united reality of the Dependent Origination and the compound world is the changing of the universe. According to Lee, incarnation and spirituality are the unity of ultimate being (God) and the physical world. These concepts of life, change, and spirituality point to a space for the meeting between metaphysical reality and the physical reality, or the ultimate being and the natural world. Above all, the third reality is the space for the meeting between the ultimate being and the physical world that is dynamism.

Dynamism is the unity of the ultimate being and the physical world, and is expressed as 'life', 'change', 'incarnation or spirituality' by the three thinkers. Dynamism is not an ontological concept that may lead to monism (pantheism) or dualism (deism). Although the ultimate reality (God) and the physical world can be ontologically distinguished in human concept, it is impossible to distinguish them in reality because they exist as dynamic unity. Therefore, the three thinkers emphasise 'doing' rather than 'being' in the

⁶²² See Myeongki Cho, ed., *Hanguk Sasang ui Simcheung* (The Depths of Korean Thought), 205-17; A Society for the Study of the History of Korean Philosophy, *Kangjoa Hanguk Cheolhak* (Lecture of Korean Philosophy), 373-82; Jangtae Keum, "Yukyo Sasangsa (History of the Thought of Confucianism)", *Hangukjongkyo Sasangsa II* (History of Religious Thought in Korea), 88-97.

understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity and nature. God and the physical world are not ontologically united, but they become one in dynamism. There are no good and evil ‘beings’ in the ontological sense, but there are good and evil ‘actions’. This holistic dynamism, which the physical reality and the ultimate reality unite as whole and one, is good, on this basis it demands an ethical responsibility of humanity, and must be accompanied by ‘conduct’ rather than ‘being’. The dynamism involves an endless movement, change, relation, communication, etc., it is ontologically formless and is expressed in numerous phenomena. Kim describes the characteristics of dynamism in the concept of *Bulyeongiyeon* (不然基然, Yes and No), Pomnyun in the concept of the Middle Path (中道, *madyamā-pratipad*), and Lee in the concept of spirituality. This dynamism is one of the key points to understand the inseparable relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature.

Conclusively, this holistic dynamism as the mode of action points to the unity of the two realms, and it may help to overcome the problems of monism or dualism regarding the relationship between God and the world. Holistic dynamism is the place of the unity of the ultimate being and the natural world in the three thinkers’ ecological theology.

3.2. Organic Interconnectedness

The second common element in the understanding of the inseparable relationship between ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature is organic interconnectedness. That is, the inseparable relationship is not based on the understanding of an individual connectivity, which may imply a separable connection between individual and individual, but the concept of interconnectedness, which indicates an organic interconnection as the common and original nature of all existences. The interconnectedness is the fundamental essence of the cosmos as ‘relation in being’, and all things as ‘being in relation’ exist in the organic interconnectedness. The three thinkers commonly point out that organic interconnectedness is prior to individual independence and freedom in the understanding of the cosmos.

Chiha Kim conceives that the universe is a great ocean ‘fullness of energy’ which reveals time, space, and materials, and humans can only partially recognise it.⁶²³ He says that the universe is filled by *Jiki* and all realities are the different forms and expressions of *Jiki*. It means that nothing that is visible or invisible can avoid the interconnectedness. That is, although all existences look like the assembly of individuals, but they are fundamentally one derived from *Jiki* and connected to *Jiki*. Therefore, Kim recognises that *Jiki* is one and many because of this interconnectedness. In this view, this interconnectedness becomes, therefore, the essential nature of the cosmos by Kim, and life cannot be maintained without this interconnectedness.⁶²⁴ Pomnyun insists that there is only the ultimate connectivity in the universe and all realities in the endless change are compound forms that are temporal and all realities themselves are part of the endless interconnectedness caused by the dependent origination. Therefore, there is only absolute connectivity in the universe, because all visible realities, whether they are evolutionarily advanced or not, are formed by the interconnected relationship.⁶²⁵ Lee understands the interconnectedness in the creation by God, one Father. All creatures derive from one source, and they are inevitably given the divine nature by the source. As all creatures are originally incarnated by the divine nature, they are connected to God and to other existences together through their kinship.⁶²⁶ In this view, the interconnectedness is the fundamental nature of the cosmos.

However, this interconnectedness is not a mere connection through the assembly of individuals as it might seem from an individualistic point of view. The interconnectedness is conceived as the indispensable fundamental nature of all realities, and individual independence is incidental in this respect. Moreover, the three thinkers do not accept an individual approach such as atomism or reductionism, because they believe that the cosmos is not conceived as the assembling of individuals but individual entities derive from the whole. It means that the whole realities have been inseparably

⁶²³ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelogy), 97.

⁶²⁴ See chapter 2.

⁶²⁵ See chapter 3.

⁶²⁶ See chapter 4.

connected in the organic relationship as oneness, and this organic relationship has priority over other relationships.

Here the term ‘organic’ indicates living and continuity. That is, the interconnected relationship itself is active and reveals as continuous circulation, change, movement, etc. Therefore, the concept of interconnectedness cannot be understood by any mechanical view which sees things having a fixed and mathematical structure. Moreover, this organic connectedness does not mean a one-sided relationship between the ultimate being (reality) and the physical world, or being and being. That is, there is nothing is alone apart from any influence, rather every existence gives and takes causes and effects. Everything is interconnected, and the cosmos itself is a living connectivity of all realities. This understanding of the cosmos can be traced back to the Eastern traditional concept of *Ki*. *Ki* as the non-dualistic reality is conceived as materials, energy, power, spirit, breathing, wind, etc.⁶²⁷

The idea of organic interconnectedness is present in many Western scholars’ thought as well. It can be typically captured in the theory of Gaia by James Lovelock⁶²⁸ and the network thinking by F. Capra.⁶²⁹ This understanding of the organic connectedness depends on the recognition of the self-identity based on the concept of ‘being in relation’ rather than ‘being in itself’.⁶³⁰ Network thinking or systematic understanding of all realities as wholeness helps to understand the organic interconnectedness, and it leads to a change in attitude: from competition, conflict, confrontation, etc. to interconnectedness, circulation, co-operation, co-existence, mutuality, balance and

⁶²⁷ Youngok Kim, *Dool Nonmunjip* (도올 논문집, The Collection of Dool’s Paper), (Seoul: Tongnamu, 1991), 38-40.

⁶²⁸ See James E. Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Lovelock says that the earth itself is a huge complicated organism that maintains itself by mutual cooperation and self-controlling.

⁶²⁹ Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life*, (Seoul: Beomyangsa, 1998), by Yongjeong Kim & Dongkwang Kim trs., 57; Capra says that ‘the whole is greater than the assembly of individuals’. Capra understands all realities are connected in a ‘web’, which makes connections, emphasising an organic system or network thinking.

⁶³⁰ On this matter, see Caver T. Yu, *Being and Relation: A Theological Critique of Western Dualism and Individualism*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987). Yu analyses the Western tradition’s individualism which identifies ‘being’ in itself rather than relation, and points out the problems of it.

harmonisation. In other words, the organic connected relationship begs for a change of paradigm from an individual to a whole, from a being to relationship, and from content to pattern. This understanding is obviously significant in ecological theology, because it is seen as one of the alternatives to individualism, materialism, mechanism, and anthropocentrism, the culprits of the contemporary ecological crisis. It also implies that peace of the whole is prior to freedom of individual, a part, or a local. On the basis of this organic connectedness, all individual aspects are reinterpreted.

However, Younghun Cho, who is a Christian ethics scholar, criticises Eastern cosmology for not allowing a place for ethical responsibility of human beings. If there is no distinction between God and human being, and humanity and nature, taking responsibility for human fault must naturally weaken. He adds that the understanding of the universe is mystical, and the role of humanity cannot be defined.⁶³¹ He claims that the ecological crisis is humanity's problem caused by humanity, and insists that the solution for the crisis is to be found in the ethical responsibility of humanity. He recognises humanity as 'a special beings' in terms of the ethical capability. He also points out that the naturalistic cosmology of the East destroyed the natural world during history because it provides a way of an exemption from responsibility.⁶³²

Nevertheless, the organic interconnectedness in the three thinkers' understanding does not destroy any particularity or uniqueness of humanity or other existences, and does not see that everything has the same ethical qualities. Rather, the ethical responsibility depends on the various degrees of capabilities or complexity of the organic interconnectedness, humanity as the best representation of the organic interconnectedness in the universe has more ethical responsibility to follow, preserve, and serve the original nature than any other beings. In this respect, particularity, uniqueness, or morality of humanity as a special being is implied in the concept of

⁶³¹ Younghun Cho, *Dongseoyang ui Jayeonkwan kwa Gidokgyo Hwankyeongyunli* (동서양의 자연관과 기독교 환경윤리, The View of Nature In the East and the West and Christian Environmental Ethics), (Seoul: Daehan Gidokgyoseohoi, 2002), 124; 158.

⁶³² Ibid., 124.

organic relationship more than in the individualistic understanding as is evident from my previous argument. Therefore, complexity, diversity, uniqueness, independence, or freedom of each reality can be rightly conceived in the view of the organic connectedness.

Holistic cosmology is often misunderstood for despotism or universalism. In fact, we may agree that the East, which has a relatively holistic cosmology in their traditions, historically experienced more despotism than the West, a representative of individualistic traditions. The three thinkers also suffered from imprisonment by a despotic government. However, holistic cosmology does not encourage despotism or universalism, instead it emphasises the organic connectivity of all entities. Kim says that there is *Teum* (틈, a gap or space) between realities, and community and individual. He interprets *Teum* as an autonomous relationship, which means mutual respect. Although all realities are interconnected in the organic relationship as part of the whole, they serve and respect to preserve individual realities in their interconnected relationship. Therefore, he insists that life has *Teum* in the organic interconnectedness as its own freedom and spirituality in this respect. Through *Teum*, all realities achieve a true horizontal friendship, co-operating relation, and partnership without hierarchical structure.⁶³³ Lee also implies a dynamic communication (spirituality) between God and creation, human beings and nature, and recognises individual dignity because all things commonly share their original nature. In this respect, he emphasises the brotherhood in kinship. Pomnyun also says that all things possess Buddha, which is the ultimate reality, and recognises the dignity of all things. In sum, although they all reveal a holistic cosmology in the concept of the organic interconnected relationship; they do not endorse despotism or universalism which ignores individual dignity and freedom. Instead, they emphasise that everything has the same level of dignity and freedom in the organic interconnectedness.

Conclusively, the three thinkers commonly points out that the inseparable relationship

⁶³³ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (Lifelog), 222-3.

of all realities is based on the organic interconnectedness. Therefore, all realities form one living network, are part of the same fatal community, and the relationship itself is continuous, mutual and interactive. Everything exists, moves, changes, and disappears in this eternal relationship. At the same time, the concepts of self, independence, freedom, uniqueness and diversity of individuals can also be properly recognised in the organic interconnectedness. Individuals and community are conceived as a human body which has one body but consists of many inseparable parts.

3.3. Harmony of Awakening (or spirituality) and Practice

The three thinkers' understanding of the inseparable relationship also involves the elements of experience and practice. That is, the inseparable relationship of all existences by holistic dynamism and organic interconnectedness is mystical, but it can be recognised or experienced through awakening and practice. We can see that the three thinkers emphasise a mystical experience about the relationship between the ultimate being, human being, and nature in practice. Probably they believe that the mystical relationship between all existences can be realistically exercised through personal awakening or the social justice. Therefore, the practical applications such as the cultivation of the self and the exercise of social justice become significant elements in their ecological theology. Although the holistic dynamism and the organic interconnectedness are conceived as the common original natures of all things in the three thinkers' view, these natures are actualised in participation to the personal and social level. Continuous dynamism and living interconnectedness automatically lead to practicality of all things, and awakening or practice consequently becomes the way to recognise the mystical relationship and to communicate with each other. Therefore, awakening or practice becomes a meeting place between the ultimate being, humans and other existences, and a channel of communication.

Kim describes this empirical element, '*Salim* (살림, living)' or '*Mosim* (모심, serving)', Pomnyun calls it '*Kkaedaleum* (깨달음, awakening)' or '*Haetal* (解脫, emancipation: *vimukti*), and Lee recognises it through the meaning of spirituality or communication.

Kim conceives the state of the triune relationship through the concept of *Kyojeobunhwa* (交接運化, Communicating, Connecting, Managing, and Becoming). That is, the triune relationship is the state of *Kyojeobunhwa* between individual and the cosmic life, self and other realities, and internal reality and external reality.⁶³⁴ Pomnyun understands the inseparable relationship through *Kkaedaleum* (깨달음, awakening), which is the state of knowing, feeling, and experiencing that all things are fundamentally formless, selfless, and suffering. Human beings through *Kkaedaleum* can truly liberate themselves from a fixed mind or form, and experience total tranquillity.⁶³⁵ Lee understands the triune relationship as discovering the original nature by the communication with God and all things. Through this spirituality or communication, the mystical triune relationship can be, he insists, discovered as the true original nature of all creatures.⁶³⁶ Although the three thinkers suggest different religious practices and different meanings of the fundamental nature, they basically pursue to exercise personal awakening and social participation in order to redeem the original nature which is the triune relationship between Heaven (God), earth and humanity, and believe it is the right way to be human being.

Awakening to the inseparable triune relationship and practice through the social practice means to be united with the original nature and communicate with other existences in reality. The personal realisation and the social participation provide human beings an indispensable experience of the triune relationship of ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature, and confirm that human beings do not exist independently. In sum, the triune relationship is performed and fulfilled through the personal awakening or the social participation of human beings, which are the dynamic activity of the triune relationship. In this view, the three thinkers recognise humanity as special beings having the ability to practise this triune relationship.

⁶³⁴ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I*, 276-7; see also chapter 2.

⁶³⁵ Chiha Kim, *Geumgangkyeong Yiyaki* (금강경 이야기, Diamond Sūtra), (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1995), 188-93.

⁶³⁶ Hyunju Lee, *Mul kwa Nanun Iyagi* (The Communicating Story with Things), 22-3.

However, the methods of the personal awakening are different according to the religious standpoints of the three thinkers. Kim emphasises a natural way of life without any artificial force through meditation and diligent life.⁶³⁷ Pomnyun encourages the way of self-emptying through meditation and ascetic life.⁶³⁸ Lee insists on spirituality and the non-possessive life.⁶³⁹ Although they have different methodology about the personal awakening, it is agreed that the personal experience of the triune relationship is the significant element.

Moreover, the three thinkers serve as examples of how to participate in the life of society as they raise their voices regarding various social, political, cultural, ecological issues. Their determination is a result of their belief that all realities are interconnected and that human problems were caused by themselves. Interests and participation in matters between human beings or human beings and nature can be viewed as the social embodiment of the triune relationship. Kim talks about 'life socialisation' in his book '*Saengmyeonghak II* (생명학 II, Lifelogy II)' in which he insists on 'people's autonomy' as the final purpose of the social political system.⁶⁴⁰ Life socialisation is based on the principle of the cosmic life that includes personality, individuality, free networking, mutual co-operation, self-systemisation, creative communication, etc. and tries to form a social system on the basis of 'people's autonomy or local autonomy'.⁶⁴¹ According to Kim, life itself has a dynamic momentum in every area even though humans attempt to prevent it. That is, life itself has the power to reveal and change a form, and he calls it as '*Johwa* (造化, becoming form). He thinks that there is or ought to be the power of life in the social system, because he believes that life continuously works in personal level, social system, and the natural world according to its original nature. Pomnyun understands the participation to the social justice in the meaning of '*Bosalhaeng* (菩薩行, to save sufferings beings)'. He says that awakening and social reformation is not

⁶³⁷ Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak I* (생명학 I, Lifelogy I), (Seoul: Hwanam, 2003), 184-5.

⁶³⁸ Pomnyun, *Banyasimkyeong Iyagi* (The Story of the Heart Sutra), 57.

⁶³⁹ Hyunju Lee, *Mul kwa Naun Iyagi* (The Communicating Story with Things), 211-5.

⁶⁴⁰ See Chiha Kim, *Saengmyeonghak II* (생명학 II, Lifelogy II), (Seoul: Hwanam, 2003), 181-209.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 202.

separable. The one who awaked naturally participates in social salvation.⁶⁴² Therefore, Buddhism describes it as '*Donojeomsu* (頓悟漸修, Once awakened and gradual cultivation) as the method of Buddhist's cultivation. Pomnyun recognises that individual cultivation and social participation are the inseparable elements. Lee claims that 'faith' is the duty of human beings in order to live 'here' and 'now' in this world.⁶⁴³ Faith means to follow the original nature of human beings in this world. He sees that the way of salvation is to live as Jesus Christ lived in this world. In Lee's understanding, spirituality reveals a concrete behaviour in individual and social life of humanity. He explains that personal spirituality is to realise the unity of God and the self through various communications in daily life, and the social spirituality is to reflect the personal spirituality into people, society and nature through the participation as Jesus did.⁶⁴⁴ In this view, the meaning of spirituality in Christianity does not only mean religious experience, but also indicates social participation in terms of its practice.

In sum, all three thinkers have recognised the fact that spirituality and socialisation go together in reality. In fact, they actively voice their ecological theology on this basis through lecturing, writing, and participating in various environmental organisations of secular, Buddhist and Christian circles.

Overwhelmingly, the three thinkers believe that the triune relationship is the key concept to perform a personal spirituality and fulfil a social justice. That is, the internal aspect of the triune relationship is personal experience for spiritual prosperity, and the external element of it is practical participation for social justice. After all, the triune relationship of ultimate reality (God), humanity and nature does not only indicate an internal nature of humanity or other entities, but also shows embodiment or concretisation in the physical reality. These two characteristics of the triune relationship are like the two sides of a coin which one does not occur without the other. Spirituality

⁶⁴² Pomnyun, *Jeolmeun Buljadeuleul wihan Suhaenglon* (젊은 불자들을 위한 수행론), The Principle of Practice for Young Buddhists), (Seoul: Jeongto Chulpan, 1990), 135-44; 176-89.

⁶⁴³ Hyeonju Lee, *Na ui Eomeoni Na ui Kyohwoiyeo* (나의 어머니 나의 교회여, My Mother My Church), (Seoul: Jongro Seojeok, 1984), 63.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 60-7.

or personal awakening reveals the internal unity of the ultimate being, humanity and nature in individuals, and social practice shows the embodiment of the triune relationship in the physical world. Spirituality and its practice manifest the depth and width of the inseparable triune relationship of ultimate reality (God), humanity and nature in individual and society. After all, one of the most significant human lives is to maintain the harmony between spiritual experience and social activities in the understanding of the triune relationship. In this view, it is believed that the triune relationship can be truly achieved through both the internal spirituality and the external practice, and it consequently provides human beings an ideal life. Therefore, their ecological theologies naturally pursue 'harmonisation' of spirituality and practice in daily life.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter my aim was to explore the commonalities and differences in the concepts of ultimate reality (God), humanity and nature, and their relationship displayed by Chiha Kim, Pomnyun and Lee. I found that the three thinkers agree on the concepts of holistic dynamism, organic interconnectedness, and harmony of awakening (or spirituality) and social participation. These elements can be conceived as the original natures of the cosmos, which all existences share in the three thinkers' view, and proves the inseparable triune relationship of ultimate reality (God), human being and nature. Their commonalities also demonstrate that their ecological theology move in a common direction regarding the understanding of the relationship between ultimate reality (God), humanity and nature. Particularly in the multi-religious context of Korea, the concepts of the holistic dynamism, the organic interconnectedness, and the experience of the personal and social practice have formed the common grounds of Korean ecological theology. As we saw, the common ground is the acceptance of the triune relationship of ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The environmental movement of Korea began in earnest when ‘the Research Institute for Pollution Problem of Korea’ was founded in 1982. In the last two decades, the environmental movement substantially developed in terms of the degrees of people’s recognition and participation, and many environmental organisations were founded and have been actively campaigning against the development plans of the government (e.g. the reclamation of *Saemangeum* (새만금) beach at present). However, there was a limitation to provide a theoretical or ideological alternative when the environmental preservation campaign and the local economic interest are in conflict, because the campaign focused on the protest against government policies as opposed to formulating an ecological proposal for the long term strategy or provide people ecological education. Some local people has not welcomed this environmental movement which is always against the constructions of dams, reclamations, power plants, highways, etc in order to enhance economic performance on a local and national level. Moreover, although various ecological organisations joined the ecological movement, it has been questioned whether there is a common ecological theology, which we can share, as the ideological basis which might lead ecological movement in the long run. Especially in the multi-religious Korean society, the creation of an ecological theology that people can commonly recognise, is a significant task for the whole ecological movement. It is no doubt that the fundamental purpose of the ecological movement is to change the lifestyles and cosmology of people from the exploitation of nature to the coexistence with nature. Under the circumstances, my research started from the questions: what are the characteristics of the contemporary ecological theology in Korea? What is the appropriate ecological theology in the context of Korea as a direction of ecological movement in the long term? Is there a common element in the contemporary Korean ecological theology? Upon these questions, this research selected three thinkers who actively work on ecological theology and movement at the present in different religious backgrounds.

It is no doubt that the understanding of the relationship of all existences is the key element of ecological theology. Many scholars have presented ideas on this relationship from their religious, philosophical, or ethical perspectives.⁶⁴⁵ The ideas with regard to the relationship among all things determined the structure of this thesis. Moreover, the premise of this research was that ecological theology can properly flourish in reflecting its dependent contexts, because the cause of local ecological crisis comes from their local contexts. This research, therefore, examined three thinkers' understandings in the multi-religious context of Korea, and in so doing it tried to identify a lively voice of local ecological theology.

In sum, Korean ecological theology in the multi-religious context has the common elements of holistic dynamism, organic interconnectedness, and harmonisation of practice. The directing force of these elements is the triune relationship of ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature.

1. The Way of Triune Relationship of Ultimate Reality, Human Beings, and Nature as a Fundamental Nature of All

Although their religious background determines the views and concepts of the three thinkers, it is obvious that their conclusion point to one direction in relation to the triune relationship of ultimate reality (God), humanity and nature. Conclusively, the relationship between ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature in three thinkers' ecological theology is based on the *triune relationship*, which is called '*Cheonjiinhapil* (天地人合一, the Unity of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity)' in Korean. That is, all entities have the triune nature of ultimate reality (God), human being, and nature as their fundamental nature, and all entities are rightly perceived in this triune relationship. This understanding of the tri-unity may be described by the figures as follows:

⁶⁴⁵ See Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment & Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). This book has well examined various ecological perspectives, and presented the strong and weak points of their arguments.



Figure 1

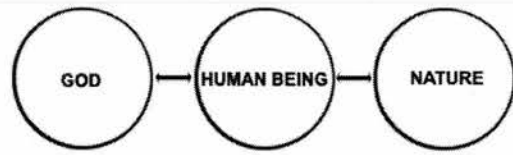


Figure2

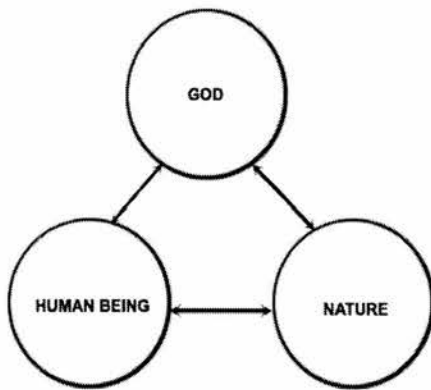


Figure 3

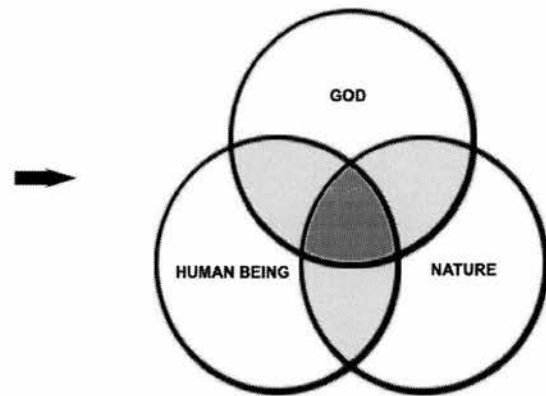


Figure 4

These figures show the conceptual frameworks of the understanding of the relationship of God, humanity, and nature. Figure 1 represents a hierarchical structure of thinking which typically places nature below humanity. In this hierarchical structure, nature only exists for humanity's sake, and becomes the object for human benefits and interests and is unlimitedly exploited by human needs. Moreover, in this view, nature is always conceived as an administrative object for human welfare. Therefore, to overcome the ecological crisis the emphasis on the protection of nature by human stewardship is said

to be sufficient. Figure 2 indicates a total egalitarianism to avoid hierarchical structure, and shows that God or human beings are not given any special status. Figure 3 is the progressive version of figure 2. Figure 3 shows connectivity on an individual basis, which is primarily based on each reality's independence and particularity. In this view, the unity of all realities means the assembly of all separated independent realities, and the relationship between realities seems to depend on the individual's independent choice. It is also based on an ontological approach by the understanding of 'being in itself' that emphasises the concept of self in an individual being.⁶⁴⁶ Although this understanding of the relationship overcomes a humanocentric view and a pantheistic perspective and shows equality in recognising the uniqueness of each reality, it does not indicate a common nature shared by each reality. The idea behind this representation is problematic in that it allows for a competitive relationship and conflict caused by their individual interests. Figure 4 shows the triune relationship. This triune relationship indicates that God, human being and nature have differences as well as oneness simultaneously. Although each entity has its own unique nature, they also possess an inseparable or indistinguishable nature. The darkest part in the figure 4 expresses the triune relationship as the common nature shared by all entities.

Colin E. Gunton has a similar consideration in his trinitarian conceptuality. The meaning of Trinity indicates that God exists only in the communion of three, and there are interrelatedness of the persons and the unique individuality-in-relation of each person. In the understanding of the transcendent and immanent God, Gunton argues that God has 'otherness and relation' simultaneously. That is, God and the world have both otherness – the ontological distinction and the qualitative difference and relation – and the unity and the communion, which are the two central dimensions.⁶⁴⁷ In other words, otherness of all realities provides a space to understand uniqueness, particularity and freedom in relation; and the relation of all entities maintains the communion and unity

⁶⁴⁶ See Carver T. Yu, *Theology and Science at the Frontiers of Knowledge: Being and Relation, A Theological Critique of Western Dualism and Individualism*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), 64-106. Yu points out that the concept of the being or identity of the self was perceived as a closed system, existing in itself, and needing no entity other than itself according to the Western tradition.

⁶⁴⁷ Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 201-4.

in the individual distinction. This balanced conceptuality opens a possibility to overcome the inconsistencies of pantheism and deism: and provides a basis for the understanding of the triune relationship. Although it is not clear that Gunton's understanding of 'relation' is collectivistic or holistic, he develops the trinitarian conceptuality into the understanding of human beings and the natural world.

The triune relationship of God, humanity, and nature does not point to a relationship or a communication by the collective unity of individuals, rather means the inseparable and indistinguishable relationship in the holistic oneness. All realities have a fundamental nature on which the triune relationship is based as well as their unique nature. That fundamental nature includes interdependence, interconnectedness, oneness, communion, and the relationship among each entity may be described by continuity and dynamism. The unique nature of each entity includes independence, autonomy, diversity, particularity, contingency, finiteness and distinctiveness. This triune relationship has been expressed by the three thinkers such as life, interconnectedness, incarnation, harmonisation, natural order, organic change, endless generation, dependent origination, spirituality, socialisation, etc. I brought these expressions together in the concepts of holistic dynamism, organic interconnectedness and harmony of personal experience and social participation.

Overall, it can be said that the three thinkers' ecological theology have been built on the common recognition of the triune relationship of the ultimate being (reality), human beings and nature. Consequently, I propose that the concept of the triune relationship of all existences is a suitable way forward for contemporary Korean ecological theology. In this respect, the true life of human beings can be fulfilled in this dynamic triune relationship as human life is part of both internally and externally, the triune and inseparable relationship. Conclusively, the foundation of Korean ecological theology is the triune relationship recognising that no entity is outside of it and that it is not a matter of will of choice: it is part of the nature of all entities. The ultimate purpose of ecological theology in the Korean context is to facilitate a harmonised lifestyle

characterised by the dynamic triune relationship of ultimate reality (God), humanity, and nature.

2. Towards Building A Korean Ecological Way

In offering an analysis of ecological theologies of three thinkers, in this thesis I hope to have made an original contribution to the study of Korean ecological theology. In recent years the direction of the Korean ecological theology has become the centre of debate among Korean ecological activists and scholars who are beginning to acknowledge a necessity of an appropriate thought in the Korean context. This resulted in a renewed interest in religious dialogue relating to ecological issues, and there are some signs that ecological scholars are beginning to be interested in the multi-religious traditions in Korea.

Under these circumstances, the three thinkers' ecological theologies would provide a significant key in the centre place of this argument, because their ecological ideas have well reflected the Korean context. My hope and ambition is that this thesis will provide one of the examples of such religious dialogues relating to ecological issues. People who live in a multi-religious context naturally internalise the multi-religious structure, and the integrated religious forms no longer seem strange. Such as the three thinkers themselves naturally adopted other religious concepts and practices into their religious thought, it is inevitable to attempt to create religious coherence and harmony that does not damage the identity and vitality of each religion. Religious harmonisation has characterised the long history of Korea, and remains a unique form of Korean thought especially in the case of Korean ecological theology. This research also aims to point out that the religious harmonisation in Korean ecological theology is inevitable. The understanding of the dynamic triune relationship is intended to become one of the outcomes of the religious harmonisation. While this research was in progress, it was continuously questioned in mind that what the responsibility and duty of religion about the contemporary issues are. The fact that religion exists for people and the society and

not the other way round, because each religion has changed according to its status and the historical context in which it prevailed *for, in, and by* people and society. Therefore, the mission of all the religions in Korea must be to assist ecological theology to overcome the contemporary ecological destruction, which is one of the most urgent issues at present. In order to achieve that, Korean ecological theology should be continuously refined through various religious arguments, and the concept of a dynamic triune relationship should critically be discussed in the ecological theology.

There are two well-known approaches to theology or religious studies. One is the perspective of 'from above' in which the text is God, religious doctrine, religious rites etc., where the context becomes reality, people, culture, the society, nature etc., and this perspective tries to interpret the context through the eyes of the text. The other approach is 'from below' which mainly considers people, culture, the society etc., as a text and approaches religious concepts through the eyes of this reality. However, by introducing the concept of a triune relationship I suggested a 'middle path', in which religion and human reality meet, because they all constitute the text.

In considering theological or religious approaches, the middle path indicates a way which deals with 'above' and 'below' as texts rather than one being the text and the other becoming the context. It is because of the awareness of the danger of any centric tendency which might distinguish between priority and posteriority, as well as centre and margin. The middle path is based on the recognition that it is virtually impossible to distinguish between text and context; and considers both religions and cultures with the same degree of importance: both are texts. This is because the physical reality or culture cannot be properly interpreted without religious understanding which already influenced reality, nor can religion exist and is pointless without culture which has already been shaped in religions. As we have already seen with Buddhism, Donghak and Christianity in the Korean context, the ultimate reality and this world, religion and culture cannot practically exist separate from each other although they can be recognised as different in a conceptual understanding. They have shown an integrated form with continuous inter-

action. In this sense, the middle path as a methodological approach maintains a harmony which guards against inclining to one side or another.

Korean ecological theology serves as an example of discussing both religious and ecological perspectives and the concept of the dynamic triune relationship deserves to be one of the topics. In the history of Korea, each religion and its historical context interacted influencing each other. People and society found a way to solve the problems of their time through this exchange. In this respect, Korean ecological theology can be a lively local voice taking on the responsibility of problem solving along the same lines. Advocating theory and practice, awakening and cultivation, being and relation, personal experience and social participation etc.; it demonstrates the significance of practicality as an inseparable essential element of the dynamic triune relationship. The three thinkers have shown that their ecological theology is not only theoretical, but they participate actively in movements, have religious experiences and engage in religious practice. On a practical level the triune relationship includes the harmonisation of spirituality by personal awakening and social participation; therefore it is a suitable concept for the ecological theology of Korea. Conclusively, the concept of the dynamic triune relationship suggests a direction for building Korean ecological theology.

3. Limitations and Values of This Research

This research has several limitations. Firstly, there are many other scholars and ecological ideas in Korea which this research could not cover because of the allotted space. At the same time the three thinkers' ideas are typical of ecological theology. There are other thinkers who have different positions representing Donghak, Buddhism, and Christianity. Secondly this research did not cover ecological theology from the perspective of Confucianism and Taoism, which are also ideologically influential in Korean traditions at present. They also put forward valuable ecological perspectives and produce various arguments. Thirdly, the three thinkers are still active and have been producing many materials, which points to the lack of secondary literature, even though

there are many primary sources that I used extensively. For similar reasons, this thesis cannot be considered as a piece of work representative of the three thinkers. Instead, I aimed at articulating their basic ideas in order to explore the commonalities which in turn allowed me to present a concept that is not only acceptable for all of them, but is inherent in their thinking regardless their background. Finally, this research did not allow a lot of space for various western ecological arguments, because I had to look at Chiha Kim, Pomnyun and Lee in as much depth as possible in order to present my argument as clearly as possible.

This research aimed to present the characteristics of Korean ecological theology through the three thinkers' thought, and revealed the triune relationship as the common characteristic of Korean ecological theology. However, it is necessary to examine its implications and applications in each religious perspective as further study. Additionally, in this thesis, to translate various Korean religious terms into English was not easy because of their unique implications containing their religious backgrounds. In order to overcome this limitation, this thesis tried to use the original languages as much as possible in order to maintain their original meaning.

Nevertheless, there are some valuable points in this thesis. Firstly, this research might provide an idea on the current circumstances of contemporary ecological theology in Korea. Secondly, this viewpoint of the dynamic triune relationship itself may provide the possibility of ecological activity in the future. It might provide an ideological or methodological foundation that various religions and organisations in ecological movement can commonly share and use as the basis for the movement. In the multi-religious context of Korea, there are different kinds of ecological theology; the concept of the triune relationship is common in all of them.

I hope that this thesis would contribute to go one step forward as one of the references for Korean ecological philosophy.

Glossary

- Ae* 애 (哀 Sorrow)
Ae 애 (愛 Love)
Ann 안 (Inside)
Bak 밖 (Outside)
Bap 밥 (Rice)
Beommangkyeong 범강경 (梵網經 Sutra of the Net of Brahman)
Bubjib 법집 (法執, the Attachment to Dharmas)
Bulgamyong 불가명 (不可名 Not possible to name)
Bulibiil 불이비일 (不二非一 No two not one)
Bulyeongiyeon 불연기연 (不然基然 Yes and No)
Bunwhang Temple 분황사
Chamseon 참선 (參禪 Meditation in Zen-Buddhism)
Cheondokyo 천도교 (天道敎)
Cheonjiin Habil Sasang (天地人合一 思想 The Idea of the Unity of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity)
Cheonjijisim 천지지심 (天地之心 Heaven and Earth Connecting to Human Mind)
Chi 지 (智 Wisdom)
Chiljeong 칠정 (七情 the Seven Feelings)
Chonju 천주 (天主 the Heavenly Lord)
Chulga 출가 (出家 Homelessness)
Daeseung Bulkyo 대승불교 (大乘佛敎 the Mahayana)
Daeseung Kishinron 대승기신론 (大乘起信論 Awakening of Faith)
Damsi 당시 (譚詩 Ballad Type of Poetry)
Danhak 단학 (丹學 Ki Philosophy)
Deulshum 들숨 (Inhalation)
Donghak 동학 (東學 the Eastern Studies)
Dongkwilche 동귀일체 (同歸一體 All Things Drive from One Body and Return to One Body)
Dongtyeongdaejeon 동경대전 (東經大全 the Great Completion of Eastern Scripture)
Donojeomsu 돈오점수 (頓悟漸修 Once Awakening and Gradual Cultivation)
Gatensalim 같은살림 (The Same Living)
Gibokshinang 기복신앙 (祈福信仰 Faith of Fortune)
Gidogkyo Sasang 기독교사상 (基督教思想, Christian Thought),
Go 고 (苦 Suffering)
Gogo 고고 (苦苦 Suffering of Sense)
Goi 괴 (壞 Scattering or Collapsing)
Gong 공 (空 Emptying)
Guigo 괴고 (壞苦 Suffering of Disintegration)

Guktong 국통 (國統 A Adviser of the King as National Buddhists)
Gut 굿 (Ceremony)
Haeng 행 (行 Will)
Haenggo 행고 (行苦 Suffering of Impermanence)
Haetal 해탈 (解脫 Liberation)
Hakseup 학습 (學習 Learning or Experiencing)
Hana 하나 (One)
Hanadeul 하나들 (Ones)
Haneul 하늘 (Heaven)
Haneunim 하느님 (God)
Hanjipsalim 한집살림 (Living in One House)
Hansalim Undong 한살림 운동 (One Living Movement)
Hanulnim 한울님 (The Lord of Heaven or God)
Heaemjong 화엄종 (華嚴宗 Hua-yen school or Flower Garland school)
Hongikingan 홍익인간 (弘益人間 Widely helping all human beings)
Hucheongaebyeok 후천개벽 (後天開闢 the Beginning of the Post-Heaven)
Hui 희 (喜 Joy)
Hwaeom Sasang 화엄사상 (華嚴思想 Avatamska)
Hwajaeng 화쟁 (和諍 Reconciliation and Harmony)
Hwarangdo 화랑도 (花郎道 The Code of Silla Chivalry)
Hwawom 화엄 (華嚴 the Flower Garland)
Iljeukta Tajeukil 일즉다 다즉일 (一卽多, 多卽一 One Is Many and Many Are One)
Ilsim 일심 (一心 One Mind)
In 인 (仁 Benevolence or Perfect Virtue)
Innaecheon 인애천 (人乃天 Human Being Is thus God)
Innaechon 인내천 (人乃天 Humanity Is even Heaven)
Jayeon 자연 (自然 Self-so-ness)
Jayu 자유 (自有 Liberation)
Jeongto Sasang 정토사상 (淨土思想 the Thought of Pure Land)
Jeongto 정토 (Pure Land)
Jeophwagunsaeng 접화군생 (接化群生 Moving All Things by Contacting Together)
Jiki 지기 (至氣 the Utmost Ki)
Jongbeob 종법 (宗法 Kinship Law)
Joo 주 (住, Staying or Living)
Judong 주동 (Leadership)
Jugeum 죽음 (to Die)
Jugim 죽임 (to Kill)
Jukiron 주기론 (主氣論 Ki Centralism)
Jungsim 중심 (中心 The Centre of Heart)
Juriron 주리론 (主理論 Principle Centralism)
Ki 기 (氣 Ki)

Kiwuje 기우제 (祈雨祭 Rituals for Rain)
Kkaedaleum 깨달음 (Awakening)
Ku 구 (懼 Fear)
Kyeong 경 (敬 Respect)
Kyojong 교종 (敎宗 Kyo Buddhism)
Kwyiil 귀일 (歸一 Returning to the One)
Liki 리기 (理氣 Principle and Material Force)
Lisechiwha 이세치화 (理世治化 Ruling and Living as the Principle of the Cosmos)
Lyongdamyusa 영담유사 (龍談有史)
Minjok 민족 (民族 Nation)
Minju 민주 (民主 Democracy)
Minjung 민중 (民衆 People)
Mu 무 (無 Nothingness)
Muaah 무아 (無我 Selflessness)
Mumyeong 무명 (無明 Non-enlightenment)
Musang 무상 (無常 the Formless)
Musim 무심 (無心 Absentmindedness)
Musoyu 무소유 (無所有 Non-possession)
Muwi Mubulwi 무위 무불위 (無爲 無不爲 Not Doing nothing as Doing Nothing)
Muwi 무위 (無爲 Doing Nothing)
Muwijayeon 무위자연 (無爲自然 Doing Nothing but Self-so-ness)
Naeyusinlyeong 내유신령(內有神靈 There Is Internal Spirit)
Nalshum 날숨 (Exhalation)
Nam 남 (南 South)
No 노 (怒 Anger)
O 오 (惡 Hatred)
Oeyugihwa 외유기화 (外有氣化 There Is External Formation)
Ojeok 오적 (五賊 Five Enemies)
Ongeun Hana 옹근 하나 (Whole One or Wholeness)
Ro-Byeong 노병 (老病 Aging and Sickening)
Sa 사 (死 Death)
Sadan 사단 (四端, the Four Beginnings)
Saek 색 (色 Material)
Saemyeong Undong 생명운동(生命運動 Life Movement)
Saeng-Joo-Lee-Myeol 생주이멸 (生住移滅 Appearing-Staying-Moving-Disappearing)
Saengmyeong kwa Jachi 생명과 자치 (生命과 自治 Life and Autonomy)
Saengmyeong Minhoe 생명민회 (生命民會 the Local Network of Life)
Saengmyeong Sasang 생명사상 (生命思想 Life Thought)
Saengmyeong 생명 (生命 Life)
Saeng-Ro-Byeong-Sa 생로병사 (生老病死 Birth-Ageing-Sickening-Death)

Salim 살림 (to Put Life or Living).
Samgang Oryun 삼강오륜 (三綱五倫 the Three Bonds and the Five Moral Disciplines in Human Relations)
Samkyeong 삼경 (三敬 Three Respects)
Samlamansang 삼라만상 (森羅萬象 All Creation)
Sancheonje 산천제 (山天祭 Rituals for Earth and Heaven)
Sang 상 (想, Perceptions)
Sangje 상제 (上帝 The Being above)
Seon 선 (仙 Indigenous Belief of Immortal Men)
Seong 성 (成 Originating or Creating)
Seong 성 (誠 Wholeheartedness)
Seong-Joo-Goi-Gong 성주괴공 (成住壞空, Originating-Staying-Collapsing-Emptying)
Seonjong 선종 (禪宗 Zen Buddhism)
Shum 숨 (Breath)
Sicheonju 시천주 (侍天主 to Serve the Lord of Heaven)
Sik 식 (識, Consciousness)
Sin 신 (信 faith)
Siningan 신인간 (新人間 A new humanity)
Ssial 씨알(a seed)
Su 수 (受, Sensations)
Sunglihak 성리학 (性理學 Mind and Principle School)
Sunmyeong 순명 (順命 Submission)
Ta 타 (Other)
Taja 타자 (Others)
Tangun 단군 (檀君 Tan King)
To 도 (道 Tao)
Toteokyeong 도덕경 (道德經 Tao-Te Ching)
Ui 의 (義 Righteousness)
Won Buddhism 원불교 (圓佛敎 One Buddhism)
Ye 예 (禮 Propriety)
Yehak 예학 (禮學 Propriety School)
Yeonki 연기 (緣起 The Dependent Origination)
Yok 욕 (慾 Desire)
Yongdamyusa 용담유사 (龍潭遺詞 the Words of Dragon's Pond)
Youlneyo 율려 (The centric sound of cosmos)

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